Reading Medieval Sources | 6

Origin Legends in Early Medieval Western Europe

Edited by **Lindy Brady** *and* **Patrick Wadden**

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Reading Medieval Sources

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Lindy Brady and Patrick Wadden

> The Book of Druimm Snechtai says that Amairgen asked concerning her race (*cenél*). 'I am descended from Adam,' said she. 'To which lineage (*cenél*) of Noah's sons do you belong?' said he.[1]

This quotation comes from a version of the medieval Irish origin legend known as *Lebor gabála Érenn* ("Book of the Taking of Ireland"). The context is the initial arrival in Ireland of the Gaels, the inhabitants of early medieval Ireland known in Latin sources as the *Scotti* or *gens Scottorum*. Ireland was already inhabited when the Gaels arrived, and Amairgen was the first of the new settlers to encounter one of the locals, a mysterious woman. The passage records his initial encounter with her and his efforts to discover her identity. Underpinning Amairgen's questions are some assumptions central to the genre being addressed in the current volume, and a brief discussion of them will serve as a useful introduction. His first question assumes that humankind is divided into *cenéla* (s. *cenél*) and that every individual must belong to one or other of these. *Cenél* is an Old Irish word corresponding in its shades of meaning with Latin *gens* (pl. *gentes*). Both belonged to a range of terms used in the medieval period to describe groups of peoples with a (perceived) shared identity of some sort: *gens*, *natio*, *populus*, and *regnum* were most common in Latin, alongside corresponding phrases in various vernaculars.[2] Both the Latin *gens* and the Old Irish *cenél* implied biological

1 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy, MS D.iii.1 (671), fol. 14v b33–37, ed. and trans. John Carey, *A Single Ray of Sun: Religious Speculation in Early Ireland* (2nd ed. Aberystwyth, 2011; 1st ed. 1999), p. 31. See R.A. Stewart Macalister, ed. and trans., *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, 5 vols (London, 1938–56), 5:3, 4–5. Portions of this Introduction draw on Lindy Brady, *The Origin Legends of Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2022).

2 See Patrick J. Geary, "Ethnic Identity as a Situational Construct in the Early Middle Ages," *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien* 113 (1983), 15–26; B. Zientara, "*Populus—gens—natio*. Einige Probleme aus dem Bereich der ethnischen Terminologie des frühen Mittelalters," in *Nationalismus in vorindustrieller Zeit*, ed. Otto Dann (Munich, 1986), pp. 11–20; F. Lošek, "Ethnische und politische Terminologie bei Iordanes und Einhard," in *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol. 1, ed. H. Wolfram and W. Pohl, Denkschriften der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, philosophisch-historische Klasse 201 (Vienna, 1990), pp. 147–52.

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kinship and could be used to refer to family- or extended kin-groups. But they could also refer to larger communities, including what today would be considered ethnic groups, peoples, perhaps nations, each of which was believed by contemporaries to possess its own distinct name, language, laws, customs, and territory.[3] Medieval Europe was a world of *gentes*, the unity of the *imperium Romanum* and *populus Romanus* having been replaced by a patchwork of kingdoms and regions whose inhabitants expressed their identities in ethnic terms. These identities mattered, for political, legal, and social reasons. In some areas, individuals with different ethnic identities might have different legal systems within the same kingdom, as was the case for Romans and Goths living in the Visigothic kingdom of Spain in the 6th and the first half of the 7th centuries, for example. Elsewhere, as in Anglo-Saxon Wessex under King Ine (d. after 726), for instance, individuals of different ethnicities living under the same laws had different wergelds. Upon encountering a stranger in an unknown land, a medieval traveller might well have wanted to discover, as Amairgen did, to what *cenél* or *gens* they belonged.

In response to the woman's enigmatic answer to his initial inquiry, Amairgen rephrased his question in more specific terms. In doing so, he betrayed a belief that what determined the woman's ethnic identity in the narrative present was the origin of her *cenél* in the distant past. In the Middle Ages, peoples were generally not recognized, as they are now, as social constructs constantly subject to the processes of formation and reformation, and medieval understandings of group identities thus do not correspond neatly to modern identity categories, or even to an internally consistent set of definitions.[4] This was not to say that medieval people lacked the means to conceptualize groups who shared an identity; they had both a range of criteria through which to define shared identities and a variety of terms to denote them with.[5] Many medieval authors (and modern scholars) attempting to define identity categories in the early medieval period have followed the signposts of the influential *Etymologies* of

3 W. Pohl and H. Reimitz, eds., *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities 300–800*, The Transformation of the Roman World 2 (Boston, 1998).

4 As Kim M. Phillips, "Race and Ethnicity: Hair and Medieval Ethnic Identities," in *A Cultural History of Hair in the Middle Ages*, ed. Roberta Milliken (London, 2019), pp. 123–36 at 124, writes: "It has been widely accepted that cultural factors including religion, myths of origin, shared territory, military organization, customs, language, and legal identities prevailed in early medieval societies as markers of group difference, while somatic elements such as body, skin, and hair type were less frequently remarked."

5 See also Walter Pohl, "Ethnonyms and Early Medieval Ethnicity: Methodological Reflections," *Hungarian Historical Review* 7 (2018), 5–17.

Isidore of Seville.[6] Isidore was not dogmatic in his explications,[7] and identifies various criteria by which *gentes* could be distinguished from one another, namely shared law, language, or custom.[8] In a fundamentally important passage, however, he wrote that

> a nation (*gens*) is a number of people sharing a single origin, or distinguished from another nation (*natio*) in accordance with its own grouping ... The word *gens* is also so called on account of the generations (*generatio*) of families, that is from 'begetting' (*gignere*, ppl. *genitus*), as the term 'nation' (*natio*) comes from 'being born'. (*nasci*, ppl. *natus*)[9]

This etymological definition, like Amairgen's question, emphasizes the importance of its origin to the identity of a *gens*. Group identities in the Middle Ages were understood as objective realities created at some specific moment or moments, usually in the distant past. Accounts of those creations—often called *origines gentium* or 'origin legends' today—sought to explain when, where, and how peoples, with their distinctive languages, cultures, and other characteristics came into being. These narratives, in their many forms, are the focus of the current volume.

The mode of historical writing discussed in this book can trace its beginnings to the 6th century. Roman scholars, including historians and ethnographers, contrasted the 'civilized' *populus Romanus* with the 'barbarian' *gentes* they encountered beyond their borders (many of whom, of course, would gradually be absorbed into the Empire).[10] Firsthand written information about

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6 *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. with introduction and notes by Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, with the collaboration of Muriel Hall (Cambridge, 2006).

7 As Sigbjørn Olsen Sønnesyn, *William of Malmesbury and the Ethics of History* (Woodbridge, 2012), p. 117, notes: "Linguistic affinity and difference can therefore not in itself be the decisive factor of the genesis of *gentes*, as indeed is clear from Isidore's own definition of the term, in which biology and language predominates. Isidore's account displays the difficulties of reconciling the biblical account of the tower and confusion of Babel with the obvious etymological roots of the term *gens*. His encyclopaedia may be a very useful collection of classical and patristic statements on a variety of subjects, but its lack of internal coherence makes it a very insecure foundation for eliciting general medieval notions of complex concepts."

8 Isidore, *Etymologies*, 5.6.1; 9.1.14; and 9.2.97.

9 Isidore, *Etymologies*, 9.2.1, 192.

10 The literature on this subject is vast: for an overview of the Roman impact on medieval Europe, see Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: A History of Europe from 400–1000* (London, 2009); for discussion of Roman ethnography and 'barbarian' ethnogenesis, see Geary, *The Myth of Nations*, pp. 41 ff.

non-Roman peoples during this time does not exist, and it is only after the collapse of Roman imperial authority in the west that their stories (referred to in scholarship as 'native' or 'barbarian' histories) began to emerge.[11] The oldest extant history of a so-called 'barbarian' people dates from the 6th century, when Jordanes wrote *De origine actibusque Getarum* ("On the Origin and Deeds of the Goths," more commonly known as the *Getica*) in Constantinople. Jordanes's principal source was a lengthy history of the Goths written earlier in the 6th century by the Roman statesman Cassiodorus, though the extent of his debt is uncertain due to the fact that the earlier work has not survived. To Cassiodorus, then, ought to go the credit for writing the first barbarian history, though it is to Jordanes's *Getica* we must turn for our earliest example. Sandwiched between its geographical introduction and an extensive narrative of more recent events, the *Getica* includes an account of the origins of the Goths in Scandinavia, their departure from this "hive of *gentes* or scabbard of *nationes*," and extensive migrations prior to their first encounters with the Romans and eventual settlement within the Empire.[12]

Comparable historical narratives were subsequently written by or for numerous other barbarian *gentes* across western Europe. Indeed, such was the extent of the intellectual energy and resources of ink and vellum expended on this venture that it would not be an exaggeration to say that writing histories of their *gentes* became something of a scholarly preoccupation in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. The result was their eventual proliferation into a variety of forms. They could be long or short, independent texts or tracts embedded within longer narratives. They could take the form of pseudo-historical narratives, schematic genealogies, or even images. For the purposes of this brief introduction, however, it will suffice to focus on what are perhaps the most commonly discussed kind of origin legends. These are the barbarian histories that proliferated in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Among the best known of them are the *Decem libri historiarum* by Gregory of Tours (commonly referred to as the *Historia Francorum*), *c*.591; Isidore of Seville's *Historia de regibus Gothorum, Vandalorum et Suevorum*, *c*.624; Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, *c*.731; the anonymous Frankish *Chronicle of Fredegar*, *c*.660; the anonymous *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (late 7th century);

11 For good recent surveys of this process, see the introductions to Robert W. Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination: Ethnicity, Legend, and Literature* (New York, 2015) and Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*.

12 Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi (Berlin, 1882), 4.25. On the link between geography and historiography during this period, see A.H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005).

the anonymous *Liber historiae Francorum*, *c*.727; Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*, *c*.795; the *Historia Brittonum*, *c*.828–29; and the 11th-century vernacular Irish *Lebor gabála Érenn*.

Certain features are common across many of these works. They were usually written by members of the *gens* whose history they recorded or by Romans with privileged positions that provided them with special access and insight into that history. Many provide lengthy historical narratives, though these are frequently preceded by a geographical introduction or a summary of biblical history. It is usually within these lengthy historical narratives that the authors included frequently quite brief accounts of the origins of their peoples. In an influential study, Susan Reynolds divided these origin stories into four categories: those in some way derived from the text known as the "Frankish Table of Nations,"[13] those stemming ultimately from biblical genealogies (following the influence of Isidore of Seville), origin legends claiming descent from Troy, and those professing Scandinavian ancestry.[14] These categories highlight some of the recurrent themes and identify some of the most influential sources that shaped early medieval origin legends.

The origin legend was not uniquely medieval; myths of origins are common across every culture, ancient and modern. The Greeks and Romans had their own origin legends and were aware to a degree of those of their barbarian neighbours. It is in the work of Herodotus of Halicarnassus that we encounter some of the first critical approaches to the genre, when he compares and assesses the validity of different stories told regarding the origins of the Scythians (*Histories* 4.5–12). The Romans had multiple origin legends, with Virgil's *Aeneid* perhaps the most famous of them. It tells the story of Aeneas's flight from Troy and perambulations across a vast territory prior to his arrival in Italy leading, ultimately, to the foundation of Rome. The cultural capital associated with *Romanitas* during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages ensured that this and other examples of Roman historical and ethnographical literature exerted considerable influence on medieval authors. Cassiodorus, the author of the first barbarian history, stated baldly that his intent was to

13 Walter Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations: An Edition and Study," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 98–130; repr. Walter Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp. 132–65; and Patrick Wadden, "The Frankish Table of Nations in Insular Historiography," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 72 (2016), 1–31.

14 Susan Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm," *History* 68 (1983), 375–90. For a recent survey of these categories, see Rix, *The Barbarian North*, pp. 15–19 (Rix condenses to three categories: Trojan, biblical, and Northern).

convert "the Gothic tale of origins into Roman history."[15] His successors were rarely as explicit, yet were often driven by the same impulse. The 'Romanization' of origin legends could take many forms. One of the most obvious ways in which medieval origin legends reflect their debt to the Roman tradition was the adoption by numerous medieval peoples, from the Franks to the Britons to the Normans, of Trojan origins, which "must have been particularly attractive in their proximity and indeed anteriority to the origins of Rome itself."[16] The deployment of the Trojan myth in medieval origin legends is discussed in the chapters by Michael Clark and Helen Fulton below.

Amarigen's questions quoted above highlight the significance of another literary tradition inherited by medieval scholars in western Europe, one that was to prove even more influential than that of classical Rome. The early books of the Hebrew Bible contain an origin legend of the Israelites, God's chosen people, and an account of their acquisition of, exile from, and resettlement of their divinely ordained homeland. As part of the Christian Old Testament, these would be foundational in shaping the medieval view of the world and its inhabitants.[17] The Exodus story proved a particularly attractive model for those who wrote surviving medieval origin legends, some of whom adapted and adopted it in more subtle ways than others. In the fuller version of *Lebor gabála Érenn*, for example, the history of the Gaels is traced from their origins in Scythia through many generations of wandering before their settlement in Ireland. Even if these travels had not included a period in bondage in Egypt, the fact that the story is modelled on the story of the Hebrews' Exodus would be clear. Nicholas Howe has made the case that the Anglo-Saxon origin myth had been patterned around the legend of Exodus from Gildas's work forward throughout the Anglo-Saxon period. Howe's insight that "because Gildas set the Germanic migration within Christian rather than British history, later writers could draw on his material without any confusion in historical explanation," is equally applicable to other origin myths patterned on the Exodus narrative.[18] The process of textual influence was a multi-layered one, yet it is clear that the myth of Exodus in the Christian medieval West formed a fundamentally

15 Cassiodorus, *The Variae: The Complete Translation*, trans. M. Shane Bjornlie (Berkeley, 2019), 9.25.5, p. 388.

16 Karen Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, Writers of Wales (Cardiff, 2010), p. 40.

17 On the importance of the Bible in the development of ideas pertaining to the existence of nations, see Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1997).

18 Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, 1989; repr. paperback Notre Dame, IN, 2001), p. 35.

influential framework for later origin stories. The chapters below by Conor O'Brien and Catherine Karkov examine specific examples of this influence.

Aside from the authority and cultural capital associated with both Scripture and the Roman literary tradition in the Middle Ages, there were other reasons why these sources proved so influential. For a start, each provided a means of understanding the world as a whole. At a time when Scripture was understood as literally true, this was especially the case for the story of the Flood and subsequent repopulation of the world by Noah's three sons and their descendants. Amairgen's question about which of the sons of Noah the unknown woman was descended from would have told him not only the *cenél* to which she belonged, but where it stood in relation to his own and other *cenéla* in the universal genealogy of mankind.[19] Grafting their own genealogies onto the table of nations in Genesis chapter 10 thus established a people's place in the world and the divine plan of salvation history. An association with the exiles of Troy, who were credited with establishing an increasingly large number of cities and peoples as the Middle Ages progressed, had a similar effect of linking a people into a broader network of kinship writ-large. Genealogies of various kinds often played a central role in origin legends, as Ben Guy discusses below. The embedded genealogical framework in the biblical and Trojan narratives allowed for the grafting of additional peoples onto the Trojan or Noahic stem. Additionally, the adoption of the Trojans or the Israelites as their (literal or metaphorical) ancestral models linked medieval peoples with the known world's core civilizations.

Finally, the stories of Israel and Troy had migration as one of their central themes, and movement—historical or imagined, through time and space—was a crucial element in almost all medieval origin legends. Medieval peoples invariably thought of themselves as migrants, or the descendants of migrants, whose current homeland, however strongly linked to it they felt at the time their origin legend was written, was not their ancestors'. The founding of a new homeland required not only movement, but also (if the land was empty) the establishment of new settlements or (if the land was occupied) the conquest of old ones. These themes also therefore feature prominently in numerous examples of the genre.

The myth of northern origins, or the 'out-of-Scandinavia' topos, was also associated with migration. First attested in the *Getica*, this became a common feature of origin legends thereafter. Rather than Roman or biblical influence,

19 Gaelic scholars of the 11th century were deeply concerned with understanding the origins and identity of their own people in the context of the origins of other *gentes*: Patrick Wadden, "*Prímchenéla* and *fochenéla* in the Irish *Sex aetates mundi*," *Ériu* 66 (2016), 167–78.

origin legends of this kind were long associated with oral traditions and the cultural memory of medieval *gentes*. Jordanes, the author of the first history to claim Scandinavian origins for a barbarian people, claimed at several points to have drawn upon the "ancient songs" of the Goths.[20] The belief that the *Getica* and other barbarian histories preserve something of the oral culture of the *gentes* led some to search within them for accurate information regarding the period prior to earliest encounters of the *gentes* with Rome, Christianity, and literacy, as if this could somehow provide access to the otherwise undocumented pagan, barbarian world. Their depictions of otherwise poorly documented regions distant from the Mediterranean heartland of antique Greek and Roman culture, their references to the deities and religious traditions that supposedly predated the Christianity that characterized the medieval period, and their narratives of heroic migrations, battles, and kings have attracted the attention of political and cultural historians, literary scholars, folklorists, and anthropologists, professional and amateur alike.

It is a matter of considerable debate whether the comparatively brief origin stories that feature in longer narratives are a distinct genre reflective of the cultural memory of the *gentes*. According to one view, only the portions of these narratives that deal specifically with the origins of the people constitute true *origines gentium*, the peoples' own historical traditions about their origins derived from their own historical traditions. The more obviously fabulous elements of these accounts might be dismissed as imaginative embellishments, but it was long held that careful analysis could identify core narratives in barbarian origin legends that were either historically accurate in broad outline or accurate reflections of barbarian culture and sensibilities. This was particularly the case for those accounts that ascribed Scandinavian origins to people who spoke Germanic languages in the medieval period, though the same attitude is apparent in studies of Gaelic origins, for instance. As a result, origin legends that depict the emergence of *gentes* from Scandinavia have sometimes been identified as reflecting a common 'Germanic' culture shared by certain barbarian peoples. From this perspective, however much the authors of these histories might have enveloped it within a longer narrative indebted to textual sources, when writing of their origins they were reporting the cultural memory of the *gens* itself.

This view was especially popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when romantic nationalists sought justification in the past for the existence of modern nation-states, established and aspirational, and when the study of

20 Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi (Berlin, 1882), 4.28; 11.72, 24.121.

medieval history was often pursued in the service of nationalist agendas.[21] It is important to remember that crucial presuppositions about medieval origin legends—such as their historicity, antiquity, and stability over time—were in fact imposed externally by romantic nationalists (and fascists) seeking to construct their own origin narratives of ethnicity in the modern era.[22] As Ingo R. Stoehr writes,

> any serious attempt at placing the medieval tradition within literary history has to acknowledge the political appropriation of the Middle Ages by National Socialism [Nazism], which infused a medieval literature that is—despite its own internal tensions between intolerance and inclusiveness—usually understood as characterised by the absence of nationalism, with a nationalism of the most violent kind.[23]

From roughly the early modern period onward, as concepts of nationalism took hold in academic and popular understanding, antiquarians and later scholars attempted to isolate the history and legends of 'their' countries alone.[24]

The modern study of nationalism is usually traced to Hans Kohn's highly influential *The Idea of Nationalism*, published in 1944.[25] In more recent scholarship, the idea that nationalism—or protonationalist sentiments—can be found in the Middle Ages has enjoyed a resurgence.[26] Debate on these issues was reignited with the publication of Benedict Anderson's much-discussed 1991 monograph *Imagined Communities*, which argued strongly for the modern roots of nationalisms.[27] Anderson's book has been characterized by some

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21 Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002) and Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013).

22 A selection of relevant papers is also collected in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble (New York, 2006).

23 Ingo R. Stoehr, "(Post)Modern Rewritings of the *Nibelungenlied—Der Nibelungen Roman* and Armin Ayren as *Meister Konrad*," in *Medieval German Voices in the 21st Century: The Paradigmatic Function of Medieval German Studies for German Studies*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Amsterdam, 2000), pp. 165–78 at 167.

24 For a recent survey, see *The Roots of Nationalism: National Identity Formation in Early Modern Europe, 1600–1815*, ed. Lotte Jensen (Amsterdam, 2016).

25 Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in Its Origins and Background* (New York, 1944).

26 See e.g. *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Ford, Leslie Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds, 1995).

27 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991). The literature on this subject is vast: see most usefully Ernst Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, 1983); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford, 1986); and Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (London, 1991).

scholars as "an account of nation that medievalists love to hate,"[28] and there has been pushback by those arguing for a sense of national identity (or various degrees of 'imagined communities') in the premodern period[29]—yet the matter is far from settled.[30] After an extended lull, recent decades have seen a resurgence of interest in medieval concepts of identity, and the study of origin legends has once again been to the fore, as we shall see. Much of the focus of the academic study of early medieval origin legends has sought to uncover the extent to which these stories had an impact on the process of identity formation.[31] Reynolds expresses a position typical of those scholars who have argued for strong links between the two when she writes, "from the sixth to the fourteenth centuries at least, peoples (*gentes*, *populi*, *nationes*) were normally thought of as social and political communities and … myths of the common origin of a people served to increase or express its sense of solidarity."[32] Yet

28 Patricia Clare Ingham, *Sovereign Fantasies: Arthurian Romance and the Making of Britain* (Philadelphia, 2001), p. 8.

29 E.g. *Imagining a Medieval English Nation*, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis, 2004); *Imagined Communities: Constructing Collective Identities in Medieval Europe*, ed. Pleszczyński, Sobiesiak, Tomaszek, and Tyszka.

30 Anthony D. Smith, "National Identities: Modern or Medieval?," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ford, Johnson, and Murray, pp. 21–46 at 35, writes that "It is only from the late fifteenth century that we can confidently speak of a growing sense of English national identity, in a wider national state"; Derek Pearsall, "The Idea of Englishness in the Fifteenth Century," in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Helen Cooney (Dublin, 2001), pp. 15–27 at 15, argues that "there was no steadily growing sense of national feeling" prior to the Reformation.

31 See e.g. Herwig Wolfram, "*Origo et religio*: Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), 19–38; Harmut Kugler, "Das Eigene aus der Fremde. Über Herkunftssagen der Franken, Sachsen und Bayern," in *Interregionalität der deutschen Literatur im europäischen Mittelalter*, ed. Harmut Kugler (Berlin, 1995), pp. 175–93; Jonathan Barlow, "Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 29 (1995), 86–95; Eugen Ewig, "Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte," *Die Franken und Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht bei Zülpich,"* ed. Dieter Geuenich, Ergänzungsband zum Reallexikon für Germanische Alterumskunde 19 (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1–30; Hans-Hubert Anton, "Troja-Herkunft, origo gentis und frühe Verfaßtheit der Franken in der gallisch-fränkischen Tradition des 5. bis 8. Jahrhunderts," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 108 (2000), 1–30; Herwig Wolfram, Walter Pohl, Hans-Hubert Anton, Ian Wood, and Matthias Becher, "Origo Gentis," in *Reallexikon für Germanische Altertumskunde*, 2nd ed., vol. 22 (Berlin, 2003), pp. 174–210; and Walter Pohl, "Narratives of Origin and Migration in Early Medieval Europe: Problems of Interpretation," *The Medieval History Journal* 21 (2018), 192–221.

32 Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm," p. 375; see also the essays in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000).

scholarship on origin legends and identity formation has often dovetailed with a search for an extended nationalism, and the two can be difficult to untangle.

Debate concerning the accuracy and validity of origin legends began during the early Middle Ages. Just because one medieval author found a given origin story viable did not mean that his contemporaries would. The texts containing medieval origin legends, and the contemporaries of those texts, are full of doubts, contradictions, and sneering asides on the validity of various elements and aspects. For example, the 9th-century Welsh Latin text known as *Historia Brittonum* records the origins of the Anglo-Saxons with no small amount of scepticism:

> Interea venerunt tres ciulae a Germania expulsae in exilio, in quibus erant Hors et Hengist, qui et ipsi fratres erant, filii Guictglis, filii Guitta, filii Guectha, filii Woden, filii Frealaf, filii Fredulf, filii Finn, filii Fodepald, filii Geta, qui fuit, ut aiunt, filius dei: non ipse est Deus deorum, amen, Deus exercituum, sed unus est ab idolis eorum, quod ipsi colebant.
>
> Then came three keels, driven into exile from Germany. In them were the brothers Horsa and Hengest, son of Wichtgils, son of Witta, son of Wechta, son of Woden, son of Frealaf, son of Fredulf, son of Finn, son of Folcwald, son of Geta, who was, they say, the son of a god; but He was not the God of Gods, Amen, the God of Hosts, but one of the idols they worshipped.[33]

Clearly, medieval historians looked askance at the origin myths of their contemporaries when they felt those claims to be dubious. Yet as always, we must look for political agendas behind these words. The *Historia Brittonum* was written by a British author and details the history of the Britons up to the 9th century, complete with a devastating account of the Anglo-Saxon invasion. It is no surprise to find the British author of this text heaping scorn on the pagan origins of the Saxons. Debates among modern scholars are no less vigorous.

In recent decades, the debate has been shaped to a large extent by fundamental changes to our understanding of the nature of ethnicity that emerged in the aftermath of the Second World War. Subsequent studies have demonstrated ethnicity to be socially constructed, rather than an objective, inherited category of biologically determined identity. This has had a significant impact on scholarly attitudes toward origin legends. The contributions of

33 John Morris, ed. and trans., *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), pp. 26 and 67. We have made minor corrections to Morris's edition and translation.

Herwig Wolfram and his followers in the so-called 'Vienna school' have been to the forefront in these developments since the 1970s.[34] Under the leadership of Walter Pohl, Vienna continues to be a centre for research, influencing the agenda through major ongoing research projects.[35] One particularly interesting avenue currently being pursued concerns the study of medieval concepts of identity in comparison with those of other parts of the world, including the Arabian Peninsula and the Tibetan empire.[36]

This school's perspective on origin legends is related to its view of the process of ethnic identity formation, or ethnogenesis. According to this theory, the *gentes* of Late Antiquity were not biologically or culturally homogeneous groups. Rather, they were formed through the convergence of culturally heterogeneous subgroups under the leadership of a military leader.[37] As a result of their continued military success, the disparate factions that originally made up his followers adopted the ethnic identity of the military leader—usually a king—and his closest associates. Wolfram adopted the term *Traditionskern*—'nuclei of tradition' in Dunlap's translation—from Reinhard Wenskus to describe this group.[38] They were distinguished from the rest of the *gens* insofar as the ethnic identity adopted by their followers was properly theirs, and its expressions—including its origin legend—were based on their cultural memory. In this view, the origin legends written during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages did

34 Wolfram's seminal work is *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley, 1988; first published in German as *Geschichte der Goten* (Munich, 1979)). His thoughts regarding origin legends are most concisely expressed in two essays: "*Origo et religio*. Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," *Early Medieval Europe* 3, no. 1 (1994), 19–38; "*Origo gentis*: The Literature of Germanic Origins," in Brian Murdoch and Malcolm K. Read, eds., *Early Germanic Literature and Culture*, Studies in Germanic Literature, Linguistics and Culture 1 (Rochester, NY, 2004), pp. 39–54.

35 The project 'Visions of Community: Comparative Approaches to Ethnicity, Region and Empire in Christianity, Islam and Buddhism (400–1600CE)' has, as one of its research strands, 'Christian Discourse and Political Identities in Early Medieval Europe,' The project has produced numerous research outputs, listed on the website: https://viscom.ac.at/home/.

36 Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney, eds., *Special Edition: Narratives of Ethnic Origins*, *Eurasian Perspectives*, *Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018).

37 On the relationship between political and ethnic identities, see Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter Pohl, with the collaboration of Sören Kaschke, eds., *Regna and gentes: The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, The Transformation of the Roman World 13 (Leiden, 2003).

38 Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen Gentes* (Graz, 1961), pp. 549, 568, for example; Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Dunlap, pp. 6, 37, etc.

not record the origins of the *gens* as a whole, for the *gens* did not have a single origin. But Wolfram and his followers have argued that they did preserve something of the cultural memory of the *Traditionskern* and might thus have something to tell us regarding their origins and sensibilities.

It is an understatement to say that the approach proposed by Wolfram and favoured by the Vienna school has faced vigorous opposition.[39] Its most vociferous opponent has been Walter Goffart, who objected strongly to what he interpreted as an attempt to rehabilitate the idea that origin legends provide access to a 'Germanic' past. In a highly influential riposte, Goffart argued strenuously that origin legends should be read as entirely literary constructs, not transmitters of any genuine traditions.[40] He highlighted the influence of the Roman literary tradition on the work of Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon, and argued that their works had little or nothing to tell us regarding the true origins or cultural memory of their peoples. More recently, Magali Coumert has strongly reinforced the view that these authors—and the authors of other medieval origin legends—drew extensively on the Roman literary tradition.[41] Indeed, much contemporary scholarship on medieval origin legends has underscored their constructed nature, acknowledging the agency of medieval authors in actively crafting shared identities that reflected the political and cultural realities of their times.[42] This perspective sees origin stories as no

39 Some of the most important contributions to the debate have been collected in Thomas F.X. Noble, ed., *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms* (London, 2006). For a collection of generally critical perspectives, see Andrew Gillett, ed., *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 4 (Turnhout, 2002).

40 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988). For a more recent work, in which Goffart addresses his opponents more directly, see *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire* (Philadelphia, 2006).

41 Magali Coumert, *Origines des Peuples: les Récits du Haute Moyen Âge occidental (550–850)*, Collection des études augustiniennes. Série Moyen-Âge et temps modernes 42 (Paris, 2007).

42 Each of these scholars has a substantial bibliography, and the following should be taken as representative samples only: Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Ford, Johnson, and Murray, pp. 47–57; Peter Heather, *Goths and Romans, 332–489* (Oxford, 1991); Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007); Thomas S. Burns, *Rome and the Barbarians, 100 B.C.—A.D. 400* (Baltimore, 2003); Alexander Callander Murray, "Reinhard Wenskus on 'Ethnogenesis', Ethnicity, and the Origin of the Franks" (pp. 39–68) and Michael Kulikowski, "Nation versus Army: A Necessary Contrast?" (pp. 69–84) in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early*

different from the rest of the narratives within which they are embedded. As such, while they are of value for what they reveal concerning the political world and cultural milieu of the author at the time of writing, they have little or nothing to tell us about the history or culture of the *gens* prior to its encounter with the Christian, Roman, and literate world of Late Antiquity. This is not to say that they have nothing to say about questions of identity, only to acknowledge that the purpose they served was grounded in their authors' present, rather than the past. They were concerned, not with preserving a primordial sense of communal or ethnic identity, but with promoting and shaping a particular view of one or other identity in the authors' own times for purposes related to their and their patrons' concerns. They must therefore be read in the light of the political and cultural world that produced them and upon which they offer a commentary.

This debate has generated a lot of heat and innumerable publications, and is discussed further in the contribution by Alheydis Plassmann below.[43] While some of the ardour has gone out of it of late, this is not a sign of growing consensus, and deep divisions remain between the perspectives of the two groups. As editors, we have not sought consensus on this question, and the contents of the current volume reflect something of the diversity of existing opinions. John D. Niles, for instance, without arguing for a literal interpretation of the Frankish origin legend, nonetheless suggests that it can provide insights into the history of the Franks prior to their arrival in Gaul and conversion to Christianity. And Shami Ghosh demonstrates that there is no reason to doubt that origin legends were influenced by oral sources of one kind or another, though he does not endorse the idea that they provide access to barbarian mentalities.

On the other hand, some contributors approach the surviving textual sources as entirely literary creations. This perspective underscores Robert Kasperski's discussion of the *Getica*, which he interprets as reflecting the perspectives and agendas of its author, Jordanes. Kasperski does not believe that the portion of the text concerned with Gothic origins requires special treatment as reflecting a perspective different from that of the narrative of more recent events. Likewise, Erica Buchberger, in her examination of Isidore's account of the origins and history of the Goths, conceives of his work on the topic as a single, unified

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Middle Ages, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, 2002); Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997); and Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity, and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*.

43 Some of the most important have been collected in Thomas F.X. Noble, ed., *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms* (London, 2006).

whole, shaped by the availability of textual sources and his engagement with contemporary scholarly debate.

This view is perhaps currently the dominant one. Increasingly, origin legends are being read, not as sources for the distant past but for the light they cast on the political and cultural context within which the surviving texts were written. Their authors are no longer imagined as passive transmitters of ancient tradition, but as self-aware scholars engaged in a creative process of authorship and compilation. This is where the field finds itself at the moment. Given the rapid changes over recent decades in how scholars engage with origin legends, the time seems especially ripe for the publication of this volume. Extant studies of medieval origin legends have been too often divided along disciplinary (literature vs. history), linguistic (Latin vs. various vernaculars), or (modern) national lines. To date, while there are many brilliant monographs and numerous shorter studies on the origin legends of individual medieval peoples, as well as many broader studies on the origins of nationalism that begin in (or touch on) the medieval period, no comprehensive guide to medieval origin legends as a genre exists that might be accessible and valuable to students and established scholars alike.[44] It is our hope that the current volume will provide such a guide, which both introduces readers to the current state of the field and highlights the work of those pushing it in new directions. The collection draws together original work on origin legends from across early medieval western Europe, from the fall of Rome to the high Middle Ages. It includes contributions from both young scholars and senior figures in the field, and from individuals working across several disciplines and with different geographical focuses. We have chosen to structure the collection thematically—rather than chronologically or geographically—in order to encourage dialogue and comparison between texts and regions that have traditionally been studied in isolation. It is our hope that, individually and collectively, the chapters in this volume will convey to readers the fact that there is still much debate around the topic, and much work to be done.

44 Some recent examples include Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen*, Orbis mediaevalis 7 (Berlin, 2006); Magali Coumert, *Origines des peuples: les récits du Haute Moyen Âge occidental (550–850)*, Collection des études augustiniennes. Série Moyen-Âge et temps modernes 42 (Paris, 2007); Jamie Wood, *The Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville*, Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages 21 (Leiden, 2012); Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge, 2015); and Brady, *The Origin Legends of Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*.

The volume opens with a group of papers exploring the development of origin legends in different regions across western Europe in the hope of highlighting from the outset both the distinctive treatment of the genre among different peoples and the themes, sources, and approaches that gave it its unity. Erica Buchberger discusses origin legends from early medieval Spain. Isidore, bishop of Seville, author of a history of the Goths and an influence on the development of origin legends elsewhere through his *Etymologies*, looms large in this collection. Buchberger contextualizes his work and discusses his use of a range of sources in his construction of an image of the Goths. Attention then shifts to the Insular world with Thomas Charles-Edwards's discussion of British and Irish origin legends in historiographical, genealogical, and hagiographical texts. Charles-Edwards examines origin narratives of individual dynasties and polities and the link between local and national origin legends. Marios Costambeys's chapter highlights one of the problems of reading medieval history teleologically by examining 'Italian' origin legends. The Italians have no medieval origin legend as such; instead, the different ethnic groups populating the peninsula each had their own historical traditions. Costambeys examines these in light of older accounts of the Italian past and for the light they cast on the development of local and regional identities. Judith Jesch then turns our attention to Old Norse origin legends from the 12th and 13th centuries. As well as discussing contradictory accounts of the origins of the Norwegians, she highlights the preservation of origin legends as a means of expressing identity among members of the Scandinavian diaspora. Robert Kasperski's chapter examines the possible motives behind Jordanes's historical enterprise, and argues that in the *Getica* he deployed classical ethnographical *topoi* in order to demonstrate the civilized nature of the Goths. Finally, Helmut Reimitz rounds out this section with a discussion of Frankish origin legends, highlighting the diversity of opinion that existed in Late Antiquity and the early medieval period regarding the origins of the Franks and their links with other peoples. Of especial importance, he highlights the necessity of reading different accounts of Frankish origins as engaged in a debate with one another and reflective of changing attitudes and concerns over time.

The chapters in the second part of this book highlight themes and images common across many origin legends, in particular those highlighted by Susan Reynolds's classifications. It opens with Michael Clarke's examination of the use made by medieval authors of the *De excidio Troiae historia* by Dares Phrygius. Though less famous than Virgil's *Aeneid*, this was considered in the Middle Ages to be a more historical account of the Trojan War than the work of the poet. Clarke illuminates how the text was used in different historical and cultural contexts to different ends, as an origin legend for peoples but also to

convey messages regarding political ideology. In the first of two chapters in this volume dealing with material representations of origin legends, Catherine Karkov then examines free-standing stone crosses from Northumbria, and analyses features of their construction and ornamentation as reflecting the idea that Britain was a new Eden provided to the English as a sort of Promised Land by God. That medieval origin legends were influenced by the history of the Hebrews as recorded in Scripture, and because medieval historians often claimed divine favour for the peoples they wrote about, has led some modern scholars to argue that individual medieval peoples—the Franks, Gaels, and Anglo-Saxons, for example—saw themselves as God's new 'chosen people'. This is a topic discussed in detail below by Conor O'Brien, who argues that scholars have previously gone too far in seeing the authors of origin legends claiming for their peoples 'Elect' status.

The previous chapters having thus discussed the influence of the Trojan myth and of Scripture, Robert Rix subsequently examines the 'out-of-Scandinavia' topos that is also common to many origin legends. The popularity of this motif suggests that belief in a people's Scandinavian origins had cultural capital in the medieval period. Why this should have been the case, especially in light of the associations between northern climes and images of barbarity, is one of the questions addressed in his chapter. Narratives claiming Scandinavian origins for Germanic-speaking peoples are often associated with oral tradition. Elsewhere in the third part of the book, Shami Ghosh discusses the complex questions regarding the role of oral sources in shaping the content and style of surviving narratives. He highlights the importance of drawing appropriate distinctions between 'oral sources' and 'oral traditions,' noting that orally transmitted information can have had literate origins, and of recognizing the intimate links that existed between literate, predominantly Latin (at least outside Ireland and Anglo-Saxon England) learned culture, on the one hand, and oral, vernacular, 'traditional' culture, on the other.

The volume's final part highlights different ways of approaching and assessing the content of origin legends. Two of the chapters examine institutional origin stories in relation to *origines gentium*. Katherine Cross discusses some of the ways material culture can be read as representative of origin legends, pointing to specific examples from the early medieval period, and discusses in detail the interesting case of the Horn of Ulf and York Minster to highlight the flexibility of art as a signifier of ethnic affiliation. Cross's chapter, in addition to that by Catherine Karkov, highlights an important relationship between origin legends and material culture. Far more people would have seen the Horn of Ulf and the standing crosses of Northumbria than would have read the learned texts in which origin legends survive. Identifying artistic representations of

origin legends in visual art might therefore suggest that these narratives had a broader currency than many scholars would assume on the basis of the extant written sources.

Helen Fulton refocuses our attention on the Trojan legend and its influence in shaping the medieval origin legends of Britain and Ireland, this time as a means of assessing the role of historiography in the formation of identities. That is to say, she discusses the medieval practice of history writing, of which the writing of origin legends was an important part, in light of modern approaches to the role of historiography in identity formation. Ben Guy takes aim at another historiographical subgenre, demonstrating the centrality of genealogy to origin legends. In a world where kinship provided a conceptual framework for understanding the social order, pedigrees, especially those of royal families, provided vital foundations in constructing collective identities. Thereafter, John D. Niles discusses the Scythian origins of the Franks and others. Drawing on archaeological finds in addition to textual sources, Niles argues that references to Scythian origins may reflect a garbled memory of a period when the Hunnic empire represented an alternative political and cultural centre around which barbarian kings gravitated and peoples' identities solidified, as was the case with the Roman empire. Alheydis Plassmann then reviews and analyses the debate between the so-called Vienna and Toronto schools with regards to origin legends and ethnogenesis, suggesting that the two sides are not necessarily as opposed to one another as is sometimes assumed. The final chapter in this part is the second dealing with institutional origins, following that by Katherine Cross. In this instance, Andrew Rabin examines the link between the origins of the diocese of Tours and the universal and ethnic origins recorded in the first book of Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum*.

The collection concludes with a brief note by the editors highlighting some key issues pertaining to the transmission of early medieval origin legends in the later medieval and into the early modern period.

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CHAPTER 2

Origin Legends of Visigothic Spain in Isidore of Seville's Writings

Erica Buchberger

1 Introduction

As the most prolific author of Visigothic Hispania (or Spain), Isidore of Seville is unsurprisingly also the key figure behind the origin legends of the Visigoths.[1] Isidore was born in Cartagena *c*.560 to a family that soon fled to Seville, probably as a result of the Byzantine takeover of the region. He succeeded his brother Leander as bishop of Seville *c*.600. During his episcopal tenure, he tutored King Sisebut (r. 612–21) and presided over the Fourth Council of Toledo (633), which promoted kingdom-wide unity through Catholic faith and Gothic identity.[2]

Of his many influential writings, those most relevant to Gothic origins are his *Etymologies* and *History of the Goths, Vandals, and Sueves*. The *Etymologies* (sometimes called *Origins*) is a collection of knowledge on various subjects emphasizing ancient authority and understanding concepts through the origins of the words for them.[3] Because of their antiquarian bent, we should not assume his definitions here reflect his opinion on contemporary meanings (though they may). Isidore deliberately crafted his oeuvre to influence his present, but here he was also trying to relate eternal truths from ancient times.[4]

Two versions of Isidore's *History* survive in manuscript form. The shorter redaction was written earlier and ended with the death of King Sisebut in 621.

1 While 'Spain' is a reasonable English translation of 'Hispania' and commonly used to describe the region of Visigothic rule, it is important to note that the Roman Hispania they ruled is not coterminous with modern Spain. It includes what is now Portugal, Andorra, and even sometimes the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis or Septimania in southern France. For ease, I will use Spain, Hispania, and Iberia interchangeably, but no modern national context is implied.

2 Kenneth Baxter Wolf, *Conquerors and Chroniclers of Early Medieval Spain*, 2nd print ed. (Liverpool, 1999), p. 12.

3 Stephen Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, trans. with commentary, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 3–28.

4 Barney et al., *Etymologies*, pp. 10–17; Jamie Wood, *The Politics of Identity in Visigothic Spain: Religion and Power in the Histories of Isidore of Seville* (Leiden, 2012), p. 76.

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The second redaction is more detailed and narratively developed, including the rhetorical bookends known in modern times as the Prologue or *Laus Spaniae* (In Praise of Spain) and the Recapitulation or *Laus Gothorum* (In Praise of the Goths). These situate the history of the Visigothic kingdom in geographical context in Hispania and assert the Goths' manifest destiny in the province. It is also updated through Swinthila's victories over the Byzantines in 625.[5] Unless otherwise noted, passages cited from the *History* will be from this later redaction.

Isidore actively sought to legitimize Visigothic dominance and promote a Gothic Catholic identity under which all subjects of the Visigothic kings could unite. In his role as bishop, this meant presiding over church councils and advising kings. As a historian, it meant manipulating borrowed models of history writing and ethnicity to place the Goths in an exalted position in Christendom. Thus Isidore treated the Goths as more important than other peoples in the peninsula, depicted them as supplanting the Romans both in the province and in God's favour, and arranged his narrative to make Gothic rule of Hispania seem preordained from their very origins.[6]

In doing so, Isidore faced two particular challenges. Firstly, the Visigoths were not the only possible heirs of Rome and of Catholic legitimacy in Hispania. The Byzantine Empire held coastal territory from the 550s to the 620s. The Byzantines, of course, were called 'Romans' at the time, were direct heirs of the eastern half of the empire, and were viewed in the West with religious suspicion following the Three Chapters Controversy.[7] At the time Isidore revised his *History*, the Goths had just expelled them completely from Iberia, and as we will see Isidore celebrated this as the ultimate Gothic military and religious triumph. How could a barbarian people claim to be more truly 'Roman' than they? Part of Isidore's answer was to give the Goths earlier origins as a people and greater orthodoxy.[8] Secondly, Isidore needed to defuse previous authors' negative depictions of the Goths. While some, like Orosius,

5 Wood, *Politics*, pp. 4–6, 68–73; Andrew H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 185.

6 Erica Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500–700: From Romans to Goths and Franks* (Amsterdam, 2017), pp. 68–70; Wood, *Politics*; Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 38; Walter Pohl and Philipp Dörler, "Isidore and the *gens Gothorum*," *Antiquité Tardive* 23 (2015), 133–41 (p. 141); Jacques Fontaine, *Isidore de Séville et la culture classique dans l'Espagne wisigothique* (Paris, 1959).

7 Jamie Wood, "Defending Byzantine Spain: Frontiers and Diplomacy," *Early Medieval Europe* 18, no. 3 (2010), 292–319; Wood, *Politics*, pp. 42–43; Rachel Stocking, *Bishops, Councils, and Consensus in the Visigothic Kingdom, 589–633* (Ann Arbor, 2000), p. 60.

8 Similarly, Trojan origin legends provided other peoples with a history predating Rome's foundation: e.g. Fulton in this volume, p. 340.

emphasized the Goths' Christianity and relative civility when pillaging, more commonly authors saw the Goths as Arian heretics and barbarians whose sack of the city of Rome in 410 appalled all civilized Romans. Some drew parallels to biblical scourges sent by God to punish, even suggesting the Goths heralded the end of the world. Isidore would need to neutralize the potential negative connotations in order to make the Visigoths the rightly destined rulers of a Catholic kingdom. In some instances he transformed a negative into a positive, such as admitting the Goths were once heretics but placing the blame on the Roman emperor who converted them. At other points, he looked for the positive, emphasizing their ultimate salvation through conversion to Catholic Christianity.

Isidore crafted his origin legend not uncritically but in service of these objectives.[9] He drew on a repertoire of available strategies and models from classical ethnography (especially Herodotus and Pliny), biblical genealogy and prophecy (Genesis, Josephus, and Revelation), and the writings of other late-antique authors (Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Orosius) to give the Goths the most advantageous, illustrious origins befitting their new destiny as divinely ordained masters of Spain. In fact, Isidore and his main late-antique sources used the same classical and biblical texts to explain the origins of the Gothic people. They created related narratives by building on, refuting, and adapting their predecessors' ideas, with varying interpretations of what the evidence could tell them. While their aims often differed—and therefore Isidore had to adapt rather than copy his predecessors' models—the raw materials and late-antique Mediterranean context in which they wrote were the same. Their common Roman and Christian cultural milieu led to shared assumptions about the nature of the world.[10] Among these is "a sort of law of conservation of peoples": the notion that all contemporary peoples must be descended from known peoples from ancient ethnography, the biblical peopling of the world after the Flood, or both—or that they were in fact the same peoples renamed.[11]

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9 See also in this volume the chapters by Plassmann and Reimitz; Introduction, pp. 15; Rix, p. 264; Fulton, p. 338; Conclusion, p. 458. Compare with Ambrose of Milan: Mark Humphries, "'Gog Is the Goth': Biblical Barbarians in Ambrose of Milan's *De fide*," in *Unclassical Traditions: Alternatives to the Classical Past in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Flower, Christopher Kelly, and Michael Williams (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 44–57.

10 See also in this volume Introduction, p. 16; Plassmann, p. 413–14.

11 Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002), p. 49; Peter Heather, "Disappearing and Reappearing Tribes," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 1998), pp. 95–111; Humphries, "Gog," pp. 45, 56–57; Walter Goffart, "Rome, Constantinople, and the Barbarians," in his *Rome's Fall and After* (Ronceverte, WV, 1989), p. 3; Jamie Wood, "*Religiones* and *gentes* in Isidore of Seville's *Chronica maiora*," in *Post-Roman*

Further, many peoples were thought to derive their names from their founders and their characters from the etymology of that name and from the influence of their environment.[12] Thus Isidore looked for similarity of names and for hints of the character of a people in the meaning of its name. His writings contributed to an ongoing debate on the merits of each approach and the degree to which one could reasonably connect the Goths to either the classical Getae and Scythians or the biblical Gog and Magog. As we will see, Isidore tried to combine both to give his Visigoths every possible advantage from their heritage. He also adapted selectively from the repertoire of stories available to him, sometimes ignoring or detracting from inconvenient passages, and relying heavily on Orosius, whose positive portrayal of the Goths aligns with many of Isidore's own goals.[13]

This chapter will begin with Isidore's explicit descriptions of Gothic origins. I will then dissect first the classical then the biblical influences he selected to construct these descriptions and related passages and why he chose them. Finally, I will follow his Goths' journey to his present, highlighting the narrative choices that painted what Plassmann calls in this volume an "arc of redemption" from barbarian savages to civilized Christians.[14]

2 Isidore's Origin Story

A Gothic origin story appears twice in the *History of the Goths*: in the first two chapters, and in the Recapitulation at the end. Chapters one and two state:

> The people of the Goths is a very ancient one. Some suspect that they originated from Magog, son of Japheth, on the basis of the similarity of the last syllable, or they conclude the same from the prophet Ezekiel. But in the past, learned men were in the habit of calling them "Getae" rather than "Gog" or "Magog". However, the meaning of their name in our language is *tectum*, by which is meant strength, and rightly so, for there

Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), p. 132.

12 Barney et al., *Etymologies*, pp. 11–13, 22–24; Geary, *Myth*, p. 43.

13 Wood, "Religiones," pp. 129, 159; Magali Coumert, *Origines des peuples: Les récits du haut moyen âge occidental (550–850)* (Paris, 2007), p. 119; Christopher Heath, "*Hispania et Italia*: Paul the Deacon, Isidore, and the Lombards," in *Isidore of Seville and his Reception in the Early Middle Ages: Transmitting and Transforming Knowledge*, ed. Andrew Fear and Jamie Wood (Amsterdam, 2016), pp. 165–66.

14 Plassmann, p. 418.

> was never a people on earth that succeeded in exhausting the Roman empire to such an extent. These were the ones that Alexander himself declared should be avoided, the ones that Pyrrhus feared, the ones that made Caesar shudder.[15]
>
> Gothorum antiquissimam esse gentem, quorum originem quidam de Magog Iafeth filio suspicantur a similitudine ultimae syllabae; et magis de Ezechiele propheta id colligentes. Retro autem eruditi eos magis Getas quam Gog et Magog appellare consueverunt. Interpretatio autem nominis eorum in linguam nostram tectum quod significatur fortitudo, et re vera: nulla enim in orbe gens fuit quae Romanum Imperium adeo fatigaverit. Isti sunt enim quos etiam Alexander vitandos pronuntiavit, Pyrrhus pertimuit, Caesar exhorruit.

The Recapitulation begins much the same, but then follows the Goths from a distant homeland to Spain and expounds on their character:

> The Goths originated from Magog, the son of Japheth, and have been proved to have a common origin with the Scythians. That is why they are not much different in name: with one letter changed and one removed, 'Getae' becomes 'Scythae'. They were inhabitants of the icy peaks of the west and they lived on the mountain slopes with other peoples. Driven from their territory by the attack of the Huns, they crossed the Danube and surrendered themselves to the Romans. But when they could no longer tolerate their unjust treatment, they took up arms in their wrath, invaded Thrace, devastated Italy, besieged and captured Rome, entered Gaul and, bursting through the Pyrenees, reached Spain, where they established their homeland and dominion.
>
> The Goths are agile by nature and quick to understand. They have a strong sense of duty. Robust in bodily strength and lofty in stature, they are impressive in their carriage and demeanour. Skilful with their hands, they are also impervious to wounds, just as the poet says about them, "The Getae despise death while praising the wound". They waged such great wars and had such a reputation for glorious victory, that Rome itself, the conqueror of all peoples submitted to the yoke of captivity and

15 Isidore, *History of the Goths* (henceforth HG), 1–2, ed. Cristóbal Rodríguez Alonso (León, 1975), trans. Wolf, 2nd print ed. (Liverpool, 1999).

> yielded to the Gothic triumphs: the mistress of all nations served them like a handmaid.[16]
>
> Gothi de Magog Iapheth filio orti cum Scythis una probantur origine sati, unde nec longe a vocabulo discrepant. Demutata enim ac detracta littera Getae quasi Scythae sunt nuncupati. Hi igitur occidentis glacialia iuga inhabitantes quaequae sunt ardua montium cum ceteris gentibus possidebant. Quibus sedibus inpetu gentis Hunorum pulsi Danubium transeunt, Romanis se dedunt; sed dum iniurias eorum non sustinerent, indignati arma sumunt, Thraciam inruunt, Italiam vastant, obsessam urbem capiunt, Gallias adgrediuntur patefactisque Pyrenaeis montibus Spanias usque perveniunt ibique sedem vitae atque imperium locaverunt.
>
> Populi natura pernices, ingenio alacres, conscientiae viribus freti, robore corporis validi, staturae proceritate ardui, gestu habituque conspicui, manu prompti, duri vulneribus, iuxta quod ait poeta de ipsis: "mortem contemnunt laudato vulnere Getae". Quibus tanta extitit magnitudo bellorum et tam extollens gloriosae victoriae virtus ut Roma ipsa victrix omnium populorum subacta captivitatis iugo Gothicis triumphis adcederet et domina cunctarum gentium illis ut famula deserviret.

The *Etymologies* include a similar story, sometimes nearly verbatim, under the section "On the Names of Peoples" (*De gentium vocabulis*):

> The Goths are thought to have been named after Magog, the son of Japheth, because of the similarity of the last syllable. The ancients called them Getae rather than Goths. They are a brave and most powerful people, tall and massive in body, terrifying for the kind of arms they use. Concerning them, Lucan (*Civil War* 2.54): "Let here a Dacian press forward, there a Getan rush at the Iberians."[17]
>
> Gothi a Magog filio Iaphet nominati putantur, de similitudine ultimae syllabae, quos veteres magis Getas quam Gothos vocaverunt; gens fortis et potentissima, corporum mole ardua, armorum genere terribilis. De quibus Lucanus (2, 54): Hinc Dacus premat inde Getes occurrat Iberis.

16 *HG* 66–67.

17 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.89, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 2011), trans. Barney et al. (Cambridge, 2006).

3 Classical Connections: Getae and Scythians

The first sentence of his *History of the Goths*' main text makes it clear that antiquity was essential in defining them. Identification with the Getae and Scythians of ancient Greek and Roman writings pushed the Goths' known history back, thus making them comparably venerable.[18]

To convince the reader that the Goths and Getae were one and the same, he appealed to ancient authorities. In his *Etymologies* "the ancients" called them the *Getae*.[19] Likewise in the first chapter of the *History of the Goths*, "learned men" of the past did so.[20] This passage copies nearly word for word from Jerome's *On Genesis*, which might serve as an appeal to more recent authority too for the learned reader. Jerome likewise appealed to ancient classical authorities, writing: "in fact all learned men in the past had certainly been accustomed to calling the Goths Getae."[21] Isidore includes among them the Massagetae, so-called because they are "'weighty,' that is, 'strong' Getae" who live "in northern regions between the Scythians and Albanians" and are also of Scythian origin—in line with Pliny's *Natural History*, but without directly citing his work or authority.[22] Being connected to the Scythians further bolstered the Goths' antiquity, because this people (*gens*) is more frequently mentioned in ancient sources and "always held to be very ancient."[23] In fact, in the earlier, shorter version of the *History*, it was the Scythians not the Getae Isidore began with: "The kingdom of the Goths is certainly very ancient, because it derived from the kingdom of the Scythians."[24] This more forceful and definitive assertion disappeared upon revision in favour of what can only be described as plausible deniability: some say Magog, others Getae.[25] Whatever readers believed, whichever patristic authority they wished to follow, could be reconciled with

18 *HG* 1; Geary, *Myth*, p. 60; Wood, "*Religiones*," pp. 148–58. See also in this volume Fulton p. 338; Rix, p. 259.

19 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.89.

20 *HG* 1, with parallels to Jerome noted by Rodríguez Alonso on p. 75.

21 Jerome, *On Genesis* 10.2, ed. Dominic Vallarsi, PL 23:935–1009, trans. C.T.R. Hayward (Oxford, 1995): "Et certe Gotthos omnes retro eruditi, magis Getas, quam Gog et Magog appellare consueverunt."

22 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.63: "Et dicti Massagetae quasi graves, id est fortes Getae … Hi sunt, qui inter Scythas atque Albanos septentrionalibus locis inhabitant." On Isidore's familiarity with Pliny, see Trevor Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History: The Empire in the Encyclopedia* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 1–28; Barney et al., *Etymologies*, p. 11.

23 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.62: "gens antiquissima semper habita"; Coumert, *Origines*, p. 106.

24 *HG* 1: "Gothorum antiquissimum esse regnum certum est, quod ex regno Scytharum est exortum." Pohl and Dörler, "Isidore," pp. 137–38.

25 *HG* 1.

Isidore's explanation—at least until they read to the end. In the second recension's Recapitulation, the forceful assertion returns: "The Goths … have been proved to have a common origin with the Scythians."[26] His 'proof' here is the similarity of the names *Getae* and *Scythae*, exhibiting a faith in sometimes shaky etymological connections rather than quoting a known authority like Pliny or Orosius, both of whom had in fact asserted their kinship.[27] Isidore also mentions in his classification of all peoples in *Etymologies* others who were considered related to the Scythians, including the imperial Parthians and Bactrians, changed from neighbours as in Pliny and Orosius to kin, and the renowned Amazon kingdom founded by Scythian women, taken from Orosius.[28] All these people, as relatives of Scythians, were also each other's kin.

All of these ties impart character traits too, not just antiquity. By associating the Goths with the powerful empires of the Parthians and Bactrians, he implies they naturally have what it takes to rule. From both Amazons and Scythians they acquire attributes of fierce warriors.[29] They even tap into contemporary Dacians' strength against Rome when Isidore quotes Lucan's (unsurprisingly) creative etymology: "people think they were called Dacians (*Dacus*) as if the word were *Dagus*, because they were begotten 'from the stock of the Goths' (*de Gothorum stirpe*)."[30] He confers strength on them through their Massagetae kin whose name includes 'strength.'[31] The Goths also inherit the Massagetae and Scythians' northern origin, commonly associated in ancient ethnography with ferocity, hardiness, and warrior skill derived from the harshness of their cold, unforgiving environment.[32]

However, this strength and ferocity could also be viewed negatively, as uncivilized and barbaric, and Isidore needed to neutralize this reading. His strategy was partly setting the Goths on a journey toward civilization, much

26 *HG* 66.

27 Pliny, *Natural History* 4.25; 6.50[19], ed. and trans. H. Rackham, W.H.S. Jones, and D.E. Eichholz, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1938–62); Orosius, *History Against the Pagans* 7.34.5, ed. Marie-Pierre Arnaud-Lindet (Paris, 1990–91), trans. A.T. Fear (Liverpool, 2010).

28 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.62; 9.2.43–44.

29 Wood, "*Religiones*," p. 155.

30 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.90: "dictos putant Dacos, quasi Dagos, quia de Gothorum stirpe creati sunt." Pohl and Dörler, "Isidore," p. 137; Juan Ramón Carbó García, "Godos y getas en la historiografía de la tardoantigüedad y del medievo: un problema de identidad y de legitimación sociopolítica," *Studia historica: Historia antigua* 22 (2004), pp. 182–85, 188, 190–91.

31 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.63.

32 As Isidore himself claims in *Etymologies* 9.2.105. For the stereotype, see Pliny, *Natural History* 2.80; Kasperski and Rix in this volume.

as his 6th-century predecessor Jordanes had, but he also minimized negative traits to draw attention to positives that would make the Visigoths look good.[33] So while the Massagetae were 'savage,' more often the Getae and Scythians of Isidore's tale exhibit strength, bravery, victory, antiquity, and hardiness.[34] Isidore ultimately bestows these characteristics on the Goths directly when he states that they "are a brave and most powerful people, tall and massive in body, terrifying for the kind of arms they use," and "agile by nature."[35]

Thus we see that classical ethnography provided many useful elements for Isidore's origin story of the Visigoths. By claiming that they were Getae and Scythians, he makes them an old, venerable people on par with or older than the Romans, and thus their Byzantine descendants. By referring to the great deeds, courage, and warrior skill of a variety of Scythian peoples, he implies the Goths inherited these traits. By highlighting kinship with the Dacians, who had strongly resisted Roman domination, he suggests the Goths, too, were Rome's military equal.

4 Biblical Connections: Gog, Magog, and Noah

In addition to this classical pedigree, Isidore provided the Goths with a biblical origin through the characters of Gog and Magog. Like the Getae and Scythians, they could provide antiquity greater than Rome's and warrior strength but also savagery and danger.[36] The biblical connection, though, added new elements: positively, the Goths could join the common Table of Nations schema as descendants of Noah's son Japheth, providing antiquity, links to other peoples, and a possible role in God's plan for salvation; negatively, they were associated with the Gog and Magog of Revelation who were tempted by the devil to begin the battle of the apocalypse.[37] Again, Isidore chose to skirt the problematic elements with a positive spin.[38]

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33 On Jordanes, see Kasperski's chapter in this volume.

34 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.66.

35 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.89; *HG* 67.

36 Humphries, "Gog," p. 48.

37 Genesis 10:2; Ezekiel 38–39; Revelation 20:7. On the Table of Nations, see in this volume Charles-Edwards, pp. 63–4. On salvation history, see in this volume Introduction, pp. 6–7; Fulton, p. 340; Plassmann, p. 417–18. On Gog, Magog, and apocalypse, see Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-text for Revelation 19,17–21 and 20,7–10* (Tübingen, 2001); James Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2014); E.J. van Donzel and Andrea Schmidt, *Gog and Magog in Early Eastern Christian and Islamic Sources: Sallam's Quest for Alexander's Wall* (Leiden, 2010).

38 Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths* (Berkeley, 1988), p. 29.

To connect the Goths to Gog and Magog, Isidore draws once more on others' authority and etymology: "[s]ome suspect" that the Goths came from Magog based on the further authority of the prophet Ezekiel and on the similarity of the last syllable.[39] Isidore also knits the biblical and classical threads together when stating in the *Etymologies* that people think both Scythians and Goths originated with Magog.[40] He does not explain how the Scythians and Magog are connected, but geographical coincidence is undoubtedly a factor; he asserts elsewhere that, "like the country of the Goths," Scythia was said to be named after Magog.[41]

The implied inheritance of Gog and Magog's character and destiny remained the biggest obstacle Isidore faced. He wanted the Goths to be inheritors of Christendom, not its destroyers from Revelation. Here, a brief exploration of the writings of Ambrose, Jerome, and Augustine will situate Isidore in an ongoing late-antique conversation about Gothic identity and illustrate how he was one in a succession of authors who manipulated the Gothic origin story to suit their own times and contexts.

Ambrose (374–97) was bishop of Milan when the Goths defeated the Romans at Adrianople in 378, killing the eastern emperor Valens, and his explanation of who the Goths were strongly reflected this context.[42] Not long after the battle, the western emperor Gratian asked Ambrose to write about the Catholic faith. This became the first books of his *On Faith to the Emperor Gratian* (*De fide ad Gratianum Augustum*).[43] In it, Ambrose explicitly states that Gog and the Goths are the same. Quoting from Ezekiel 38–39, he opines, "For Ezekiel, in those far-off days, already prophesied the diminishing of our people, and the Gothic wars." He predicts imperial victory over the Goths because he is convinced, "[t]hat Gog is the Goth, whose coming forth we have already seen, and over whom victory in days to come is promised."[44] Gratian's concern about the Goths and Ambrose's theological battles with anti-Nicene heretics strongly

39 *HG* 1, reiterated as fact at 66; Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.89.

40 Isidore, *Etymologies* 9.2.27; Wood, *Politics*, p. 163.

41 Isidore, *Etymologies* 14.3.31: "Scythia sicut et Gothia a Magog filio Iaphet fertur cognominata."

42 J.H.W.G. Liebeschuetz, trans. with commentary, *Ambrose of Milan: Political Letters and Speeches* (Liverpool, 2005), pp. 3–26.

43 Neil McLynn, *Ambrose of Milan: Church and Court in a Christian Capital* (Berkeley, 1994), pp. 98–106; John Moorhead, *Ambrose: Church and Society in the Late Roman World* (London, 1999), pp. 113–18.

44 Ambrose, *On Faith* 2.16.137–38, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 16:523–698, trans. H. De Romestin, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 2, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids, 1955): "Namque et futurum nostri depopulationem, et bella Gothorum Ezechiel illo iam tempore prophetavit … Gog iste Gothus est, quem iam videmus exisse, de quo promittitur nobis futura victoria."

influenced this identification. Ambrose wished for Gratian's support and so framed the emperor's victory as inevitable for someone of right faith, proven by the prophecy of Ezekiel.[45] His Goths were a scourge, but Nicene Catholic Romans were divinely destined for victory.[46]

Jerome (*c*.347–419), a Bethlehem monk, wrote exegetical commentaries and produced the Vulgate Bible, a Latin translation from the Hebrew and Greek originals that became standard in the Latin West.[47] In his biblical commentaries, without naming names, Jerome directly attacked Ambrose's assertion that Gog was the Goth.[48] It could not be true, he wrote, because no battles featuring Gog in Ezekiel matched battles fought by the Goths. As we have already seen, Jerome instead likened the Goths to Getae, appealing to classical authorities. Goths, then, could be brave fighters after their Getic ancestors, but not a biblical scourge. Jerome was prepared, however, to equate Magog and Scythian. In his commentary *On Genesis*, he aligns descendants of Noah with contemporary peoples, including that of "Magog to the Scythians."[49] This derives from Josephus, whose *Antiquities*, written in the late 1st century C.E., places Japheth's sons up the river Don. Magog, Josephus writes, founded the Magogians, "who by the Greeks are called Scythians."[50] Geographical coincidence was thus made genealogical certainty. But Gog, despite being from Magog, is *not* Scythian. Jerome's commentary on Ezekiel states, "the Jews and our Judaizers think that Gog refers to the Scythian nations, savage and innumerable," living beyond the Caucasus, and fighting against the saints per Revelation 20:8.[51] It seems Jerome can accept Magog as a neutral ethnonym for Scythians without

45 Humphries, "Gog," p. 49–51; Moorhead, *Ambrose*, p. 118; Michael Stuart Williams, *The Politics of Heresy in Ambrose of Milan: Community and Consensus in Late Antique Christianity* (Cambridge, 2017), pp. 119–21.

46 Humphries, "Gog," p. 53; Michael Maas, "How the Steppes Became Byzantine: Rome and the Eurasian Nomads in Historical Perspective," in *Empires and Exchanges in Eurasian Late Antiquity: Rome, China, Iran, and the Steppe, ca. 250–750*, ed. Nicola Di Cosmo and Michael Maas (Cambridge, 2018), p. 20.

47 Andrew Cain, *The Letters of Jerome: Asceticism, Biblical Exegesis, and the Construction of Christian Authority in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 1–4.

48 Jerome, *On Genesis* 10.2; Jerome, *On Ezekiel* 11.38, ed. Dominic Vallarsi, PL 25:25–490D, trans. Thomas P. Scheck (New York, 2016).

49 Jerome, *On Genesis* 10.2.

50 Josephus, *Antiquities* 1.6.1.122–23, ed. and trans. H.St.J. Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1930–65): "Magog vero magogas a se nominata instituit, isti a grecis scithae sunt appellati"; Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, pp. 184–86.

51 Jerome, *On Ezekiel* 11.38: "Igitur Judaei et nostri Judaizantes putant Gog gentes esse Scythicas, immanes et innumerabiles."

implying that prophecy refers to this contemporary people, something which would help Isidore in his similar quest to neutralize apocalyptic connotations.[52]

Augustine, bishop of Hippo in North Africa (395–430), completely rejected the notion that Gog and Magog corresponded to any known peoples, whether the Getae or other "foreign peoples" like Scythians or Goths.[53] Focusing on Revelation, Augustine concludes in *The City of God* that since John wrote therein that Gog and Magog spread over the whole earth, and no single known peoples did so, none of these peoples could fit the criteria to be Gog and Magog. It is noteworthy that Augustine referred to Revelation rather than Ezekiel, unlike Ambrose. Perhaps this is due to a new event in recent memory that read more apocalyptically to contemporaries: the Goths' sack of Rome in 410. Just prior, in 406, a group of Goths under the leadership of the pagan Radagaisus had entered Italy intending to destroy Rome. He was killed and his army defeated by the general Stilicho. In 410, a different band of Goths under Alaric, an Arian Christian, succeeded. His troops served Rome as a federate army, and their looting of the city was repayment for Rome's broken promises to them. However, they did not touch the churches, nor the treasures and people inside them.[54] To those who equated the Goths with Gog, Ambrose's 'Gog' was no longer just on the battlefield but at the very heart of the western empire. Augustine's writings in the aftermath aimed to focus Christian concerns on heaven not earth and attempted to defuse such apocalyptic fervour. *The City of God*, though not itself a direct response to the sack, begins by reminding those who blamed Christianity that the "bloodthirsty" barbarians would not have shown mercy without Christ taming them into doing so: "God forbid that any prudent man should impute this merely to the ferocious barbarians! For their minds, utterly savage and cruel, were dismayed, bridled, and miraculously tempered by Him [God]."[55] He asserts that had God allowed the pagan Goth Radagaisus to attack Rome as chastisement, Rome would have suffered far worse. Instead, he sent

52 C.T.R. Hayward, trans. with commentary, *Saint Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (Oxford, 1995), p. 140; Maas, "Steppes," pp. 31–32.

53 Augustine, *City of God* 20.11, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, PL 41:13–804, trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge, 1998).

54 Michael Kulikowski, *Rome's Gothic Wars: From the Third Century to Alaric* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1–10.

55 Augustine, *City of God* 1.1 and 1.7: "Absit, ut prudens quisquam hoc feritati imputet barbarorum. Truculentissimas et saevissimas mentes ille terruit, ille frenavit, ille mirabiliter temperavit." Gillian Clark, "Augustine and the Merciful Barbarians," in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Ralph Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer (Burlington, 2011), pp. 33–35; Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, 2000), p. 311.

the Arian Alaric, "who, out of reverence for the Christian religion … spared those who sought refuge in the holy places."[56]

Returning to Isidore, we can see echoes of this earlier debate. Jerome and Augustine had already illustrated that the Goths could not be the actual biblical scourge, which helped Isidore, but they also rejected the connection between the Goths and Gog that he wished to make. Therefore, he would have to borrow selectively from their models. It is possible, too, that he knew Jerome's *On Genesis* second-hand and therefore was unaware he denied the Goths' descent from Gog. A close look at the passage where Isidore states that Scythia was said to be named after Magog reveals a remarkable resemblance to the language used by Eucherius of Lyon, who summarized Jerome's *On Genesis* but omitted the original's dismissal of a Goth-Gog link.[57] Thus Isidore mirrored Josephus and Jerome's matter-of-fact geography, minus apocalyptic overtones. However, that did not preclude their being *like* Gog in character. As I will discuss in more detail below, Isidore borrowed Augustine's reminder that the Arian Alaric showed churches mercy to emphasize their piety. Also, happily for Isidore, there were others he could easily substitute into the negative role. The Huns, who hailed from the same steppe region and attacked Rome in the mid-5th century, appear as the "rod of God's wrath" just as the Persians had been to the Israelites centuries earlier.[58] His Goths are metaphorically on the side of biblical Israel, defeating the Huns "with the help of" the Roman Aëtius.[59] Both Goths and Huns came from the northern steppes and were once pagan, but the Goths overcame their heritage to be not scourges but defenders—to become civilized while retaining just the good qualities of their strong lineage.

Finally, Isidore noted how similar Gog and Goth sounded, and used etymology to imply character by stating that Gog meant "*tectum*, by which is meant strength." However, this etymology is demonstrably untrue; *tectum* in fact means 'roof.' He can only have derived his definition from an incorrect reading (intentional or accidental) of Jerome's *Book of Hebrew Names*, which lists

56 Augustine, *City of God* 5.23: "deinde ab his barbaris Roma caperetur, qui … ad loca sancta confugientes christianae religionis reverentia tuerentur ipsisque daemonibus atque impiorum sacrificiorum ritibus, de quibus ille praesumpserat, sic adversarentur nomine christiano, ut longe atrocius bellum cum eis quam cum hominibus gerere viderentur." Clark, "Merciful Barbarians," p. 36.

57 Patrick Gautier Dalché, "Isidorus Hispalensis, *De gentium vocabulis* (*Etym.* IX,2) : quelques sources non repérées," *Revue d'etudes augustiniennes et patristiques* 31, no. 3–4 (1985), 278–86 (p. 279).

58 *HG* 28–29: "virga furoris dei." Wood, "*Religiones*," p. 155.

59 *HG* 25.

"Gaza, strength; Gog, roof."[60] It is clear why Isidore would prefer 'strength' to 'roof,' but how these suspect intellectual gymnastics convinced other Latin speakers, who must have known better, is less clear.

5 Journey from Barbarism to Civilization

The remainder of the origin story fits with the broader goal of Isidore's *History* to illustrate progression of the Goths from their origins as outsiders from a harsh land to insiders worthy of Rome's inheritance. This was partially about becoming Christian, as by Isidore's time they were Catholic Christians and he was promoting Catholicism as essential to their kingdom, but it was also about making them worthy heirs to Rome in Iberia. Telling a story of growth allowed him to make barbarian background an asset, not a hindrance. He drew heavily on the *Histories against the Pagans* of Orosius (*c*.375–418), who in looking on the bright side of barbarian invasions provided the perfect arc for Gothic redemption: God's plan to spread Christianity via the universal Roman Empire and its encounters with barbarians.[61]

The Recapitulation describes their journey from "icy peaks" across the Danube into Roman territory, recalling classical descriptions of Scythia and biblical accounts of the land of Magog and the association of these places with harshness and hardiness.[62] Isidore grounds the Goths in a familiar, decorated past by claiming that Alexander, Pyrrhus, and Caesar feared the Goths, using much the same words Orosius did when he invented these connections.[63] Isidore embellishes further that they supported Pompey in Thessaly against Caesar with great valour, turning the Goths into champions of republican liberty against tyranny.[64] In the 3rd and early 4th centuries, they conquered Roman Illyricum and Macedonia before the emperor Claudius II expelled them. They were such a "powerful" foe that Claudius was honoured in the forum for this deed.[65] In 331, they "invaded" Sarmatia, "slaughtered the people, and plundered the land." After "enormous struggle," Constantine defeated them and was publicly honoured for the task. He "shone with the glory of his valour against many peoples,

60 Jerome, *On Ezekiel* 11.38; Jerome, *Book of Hebrew Names*, ed. Dominic Vallarsi, PL 23:771–858; Coumert, *Origines*, pp. 113–14; Wolfram, *Goths*, p. 29.

61 A.T. Fear, *Orosius: Seven Books of History against the Pagans* (Liverpool, 2010), pp. 1–6; Peter van Nuffelen, *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford, 2012).

62 *HG* 66.

63 *HG* 2. Compare Orosius, *History* 1.16.2–3.

64 *HG* 3; Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 213.

65 *HG* 4.

but he was most renowned for his victory over the Goths."[66] Like their Scythian relatives, they were victorious, powerful people to be feared. They were also truly Rome's equal in war if Rome's celebrated army struggled to defeat them.

But the Goths also make a journey of character and faith. They soon became Christian, but the wrong kind: Arian heretics. Isidore lays the blame on the Roman emperor Valens for sending heretical priests, thus "infus[ing] a deadly poison into this excellent people."[67] But they would not remain so, and Isidore foreshadows their coming "through Christ's grace to the unity of the Catholic faith" here.[68] In 378, they fled the Huns, and Valens settled them in Thrace, but "when they found themselves oppressed by the Romans against the tradition of their own liberty, they were forced to rebel," destroying the Roman army at Adrianople and burning Valens to death. Again, and unlike Ambrose, Isidore blames the Romans for Gothic violence and shows them to be the more natural champions of liberty, as they once were against Caesar's tyranny. He also frames Valens's death as poetic justice, following Orosius: "[h]e who had surrendered such beautiful souls to the eternal flames deserved to be burned alive by the Goths."[69] Like Augustine and Orosius, Isidore contrasts Radagaisus and Alaric, though without their crucial element of divine mercy; his story centres not on the Goths' role in the divine plan but on the Goths' earthly destiny. Radagaisus, "king of the Goths, of Scythian stock, dedicated to the cult of idolatry and wild with fierce barbaric savagery," vowed to sacrifice Romans to his gods.[70] He exhibits all the negative stereotypes of a barbarian. In contrast, Alaric was "a Christian in name, though a heretic by profession," only attacked Rome to avenge Gothic deaths, and was "conspicuous for the mercy" he showed to Christians and churches.[71] As an example of how "the frightfulness of their savagery was … restrained," Isidore recounts Orosius's tale of Alaric ordering his soldiers not just to return anything they had taken from St. Peter's church but to guard the nuns carrying this treasure as they processed back to the church. When giving this order, Alaric proclaims he was "waging war against the Romans, not against the Apostles," signalling

66 *HG* 5: "de diversis gentibus virtutis gloria clarus, sed de Gothorum victoria amplius gloriosus."

67 *HG* 7.

68 *HG* 8.

69 *HG* 66, 9: "se opprimi a Romanis contra consuetudinem propriae libertatis ad rebellandum coacti sunt … merito ipse ab eis vivens cremaretur incendio qui tam pulchras animas ignibus aeternis tradiderat."

70 *HG* 14: "Radagaisus genere Scytha cultui idolatriae deditus barbaricae inmanitatis feritate."

71 *HG* 15: "nomine quidem Christianus, sed professione haereticus."

his Christian piety.[72] Radagaisus demonstrates that Goths could still be barbaric and pagan, but his death suggests this part of Gothic character belongs in the past. The future is Alaric's Christian mercy. By repeating Orosius's emphasis on Radagaisus's Scythian and pagan identity, Isidore likewise draws on his motif of Goths transcending their Scythian ancestors by becoming Christian and civilized.

Before long, the Goths became protectors of Rome. King Wallia "was directed by divine providence toward peace" and thus made a treaty with the emperor Honorius, promising military support for Rome. His first task was to destroy the "barbarians" warring in Spain, bringing peace to Isidore's homeland.[73] The Goths also fought with the Romans to defeat the Huns at the Catalaunian Fields.[74] But with pagan barbarians converted or removed to the distant steppes, Gothic Arianism became a clearer stain Isidore needed to address. In 549, King Agila "polluted" the tomb of the martyr Acisclus in Cordoba "in contempt of the Catholic religion." He was thus punished by "the saints" when his son died in battle.[75] King Leovigild lived up to the Goths' military reputation by gloriously conquering the Sueves, but "the error of his impiety tarnished his great success."[76] "Filled with the madness of Arian perfidy," he persecuted Catholics, exiled bishops, removed church privileges, and "forced many into the Arian disease."[77] However, his son Reccared completed the Goths' spiritual journey by adopting Catholicism and banning Arianism, "recalling all the peoples of the entire Gothic nation to the observance of the correct faith and removing the ingrained stain of their error." While his father was "irreligious [and] warlike" and increased the Gothic kingdom with war, Reccared was "pious and outstanding in peace" and elevated the Goths not with war but in faith.[78] He soon, "with the help of his newly received faith," sent an army against the Franks and won a victory greater than any other in Spain. Thus conversion even improved the Goths' already exceptional military prowess.[79]

In the 620s, Swinthila defeated the Romans (Byzantines) once and for all, conquering the last fortresses they held in Spain and uniting the whole land

72 *HG* 16–17: "feriendi tamen inmanitas refrenata est … dicens cum Romanis gessisse bellum, non cum apostolis." Compare Orosius, *History* 7.37.5, 37.8–9, 39.3–10.

73 *HG* 21–22.

74 *HG* 25.

75 *HG* 45.

76 *HG* 49: "Sed offuscavit in eo error impietatis gloriam tantae virtutis."

77 *HG* 50: "Arriane perfidiae furore repletus."

78 *HG* 52.

79 *HG* 54.

under the Visigoths.[80] In his Recapitulation, Isidore celebrates the Goths' mastery of the peoples in Hispania who "feared them": the Vandals who were "widely known for their barbarity" and "were put to flight by their renown," the Alans who were "extinguished by the strength of the Goths," the Sueves who "experienced the threat of extermination at the hands of the Goths," and "Rome itself, the conqueror of all peoples" who "submitted to the yoke of captivity and yielded to the Gothic triumphs: the mistress of all nations served them like a handmaid."[81] Isidore's final line and his beginning, the prologue In Praise of Spain, demonstrate Isidore's rhetorical goal: showing the Goths superseding the Romans in Hispania.[82] The Recapitulation ends: "Subjected the Roman soldier now serves the Goths, whom he sees being served by many peoples and by Spain itself."[83] The prologue is written as a classical encomium personifying Spain as a cherished bride. It describes Hispania as "sacred and always fortunate mother of princes and peoples" and "the pride and ornament of the world … in which the Getic people are gloriously prolific" with "an abundance of everything fruitful." It is a place worthy of such an ancient (hence "Getic") people, and also of "golden Rome, the head of nations," that "rightly" desired Spain long ago and "betrothed" her to itself. But the Goths' victory over Rome and surpassing it in greatness means Hispania now rightly belongs to them, and not the East Romans/Byzantines. Isidore writes, "[N]ow it is the most flourishing people of the Goths, who in their turn, after many victories all over the world, have eagerly seized and loved you."[84]

Through this narrative, Isidore presents a Gothic people favoured by God, redeeming themselves with their journey toward Catholicism and civilization, and winning rightful rule of Spain through their military prowess against Rome and their piety.[85] They mimicked the ancient Scythians and Magog as strong warriors. They inherited a love of liberty from their steppe ancestors and devoted themselves to bringing peace to Hispania. And as Catholics, they were ready to claim the mantle of rightful Roman heir for a land that deserved a victorious master.

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80 *HG* 62: "In ipsis enim regni sui exordiis catholicam fidem adeptus totius Gothicae gentis populos inoliti erroris labe detersa ad cultum rectae fidei revocat."

81 *HG* 67–68.

82 Wood, *Politics*, p. 147.

83 *HG* 70: "subactus … servit illis Romanus miles, quibus servire tot gentes et ipsam Spaniam videt."

84 *HG* prologue: "denuo tamen Gothorum florentissima gens post multiplices in orbe victorias certatim rapit et amavit." Merrills, *History and Geography*, pp. 185–96, 227.

85 Giuseppe Cannone, "Storia ed esegesi biblica nell *Historia Gothorum* di Isidoro di Siviglia," *Romanobarbarica* 8 (1984), 5–32 (p. 19); Wood, "*Religiones*," pp. 133–34.

6 Conclusion

It was once common to read that the modern Spanish nation originated with the Visigoths and Isidore was its first promoter.[86] Historians now recognize that neither this modern origin legend nor Isidore's medieval one are unbiased accounts of the past but instead deliberately crafted with a purpose. Like other early medieval historians, Isidore adapted existing historical and ethnic narratives to promote a new vision of community that would help legitimate his Gothic rulers and unite their Roman, Gothic, and Suevic subjects into one Gothic, Catholic people.[87] Yet unlike many of his late-antique predecessors who lived and wrote in the waning days of the western empire, for Isidore, Rome was not a collapsing empire in the west but the eastern empire that competed with the Gothic kingdom for supremacy on the Iberian coast. Nor were the Goths outsiders, heretics, and rhetorical foils; they were the rightful, Catholic rulers of his kingdom whose dominance he aimed to support. He attempted in many of his works to bolster the Gothic kingdom and its Catholic Christian identity, even at the expense of the fallen western empire. He therefore modified previous narratives so that the Goths replaced rather than joined Rome in Hispania—as both political and religious caretakers.

His Gothic origin legend appropriated the antiquity and strength of classical steppe peoples, interwove these elements with biblical genealogy, and carefully selected historical events that together could convince a wide variety of readers to identify with the Goths and support their destined inheritance of Hispania. Borrowing the ideas and the authority of classical historiography, the Bible, and late-antique patristic authors, Isidore reshaped the Goths' past in order to give new shape to their future.

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CHAPTER 3

Origin Legends in Ireland and Celtic Britain

Thomas M. Charles-Edwards

The medieval Irish written tradition is exceptionally rich in origin legends, but the genre is also well attested in Wales and in Scotland. They range from stories about the origin of an entire people, such as *Lebor Gabálae Érenn*, "The Book of the Settlement of Ireland" and its forerunners, or the story of Brutus (or Britto) and the Trojan origin of the Britons, to stories designed to demonstrate the superiority or inferiority of one branch of a dynasty over another.[1] Histories may begin with origin legends or include them in an early digression: both these ways of introducing such narrative were used by Bede in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*.[2] The *History of the Britons*, *Historia Brittonum*, ascribed to Nennius is unusual in the high proportion of the text given over to origin legends.[3] Some Irish and Welsh hagiography, as well as history, contains stories that take a view of the origins of dynasties. In both Ireland and Britain stories about the origins of dynasties were intimately related to, sometimes embedded in, collections of genealogies; and these origin legends only make sense within the culture and political order prevailing at the time when they were composed.[4] The reader should note that I shall use 'Britons' and 'British' solely to refer to the pre-English Celtic peoples of Britain. 'Britons' and 'British'

1 John Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory*, Quiggin Lecture (Cambridge, 1994). *Lebor Gabála* is sometimes translated 'Book of Invasions,' but wrongly: *Gabála* is gen. sg. (earlier *Gabálae*), not plural, and the settlements were not all invasions. The verb *gaibid*, when followed by the name of a territory, is regularly 'settles, occupies,' and *gabál* is the verbal noun. On Welsh origin legends: Patrick Sims-Williams, "Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales," in Tore Nyberg, Iørn Piø, Preben Meulengracht Sorensen, Aage Trommer, eds., *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium* (Odense, 1985), pp. 97–131. For the role of origin legends in an Irish tradition in the formation of medieval Scottish identity, see Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Woodbridge, 1999).

2 Bede, *HE* 1.1 (Britons, Picts, Dál Ríata), 15 (the English).

3 *Historia Brittonum*, ed. Edmond Faral, *La Légende arthurienne*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1929), pp. 4–62 (Chartres, as far as it goes, in parallel with Harleian). Faral's Harleian text is reprinted with a translation in *Nennius, British History, and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. J. Morris (London, 1980).

4 For genealogies in relation to origin legends, see Guy, chap. 7, below.

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thus exclude the English: modern senses of these words are anachronistic before the early modern period.

This chapter will try to achieve three things: first, to set out and illustrate an outline taxonomy of Irish and British origin legends; secondly, to explain what purpose they were intended to serve; and, thirdly, to offer reasons why the genre was so popular, particularly in Ireland. The second purpose can be pursued in combination with the first, while the third will serve as a conclusion. The outline taxonomy will proceed from the largest political units, whole peoples such as the Irish or the Britons, to provinces such as Leinster or Gwynedd, then to the subprovincial level illustrated by the Airgíalla and by disputes between the Éoganachta of Munster, and finally to scattered peoples present in more than one province, such as the Fothairt and the Déssi. The main examples will be Irish, since the genre was so plentifully cultivated in Ireland, but British counterparts will be included.

Two stories were told about the origin of the Irish, first a story that has at its core a view of the Irish language, and secondly a story that gives that central place to genealogy. The linguistic origin legend of the Irish people is attested in a text of about 700, "The Primer of the Poets," *Auraicept na nÉces*;[5] the first extant versions of the genealogical legend date from the 9th century: a section of the *Historia Brittonum* ascribed to Nennius, written in 829 or 830, and a poem *Can a mBunadas na nGáedel* by Máel Muru of the church of Othan in Inishowen, who died in 887.[6] Although attested later, this genealogical origin legend of the Irish was probably being developed from no later than *c.*700 to judge by a reference in an early Leinster poem to Éremón, a central character in the legend.[7] The two legends thus appear to have been under development from much the same date, and both were progressively elaborated. Since we have a text of the linguistic origin legend from *c.*700, it is best to start by

5 *The Early Irish Linguist: An Edition of the Canonical Part of the Auraicept na nÉces*, ed. and trans. Anders Ahlqvist, Commentationes humanarum litterarum 73 (Helsinki, 1982).

6 *Historia Brittonum*, ed. Faral, § 13; Máel Muru, *Can a mBunadas na nGáedel*, in *The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum Ascribed to Nennius*, ed. and trans. James Henthorn Todd and Algernon Herbert (Dublin, 1848), pp. 220–87. The Book of Leinster version is printed in *The Book of Leinster, Formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, ed. Osborn Bergin, R.I. Best, M.A. O'Brien, and Anne O'Sullivan (6 vols, Dublin, 1954–83), 3:516–23. In his obit in *The Annals of Ulster* (*to 1131*), ed. and trans. Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin, 1983) [hereafter *AU*], *s.a.* 887.5, Máel Muru is described as "ríghfhili Érenn," literally "the royal poet of Ireland," a term which suggests not merely that he was the leading poet of his day but that he was the poet of Áed Findlíath, king of Tara, who had died in 879 and who belonged to the dynasty that ruled Inishowen, within which Othan, now Fahan, is situated.

7 *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae*, ed. M.A. O'Brien (Dublin, 1962) [hereafter *CGH*], p. 1; Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend*, pp. 9–10.

summarizing it and then seeing how it resembles or differs from the legends of the Irish and then of the Britons in the *Historia Brittonum*.

The narrative in the *Auraicept* begins as a story of the origin of the Irish language: "Fénius Farrsaid invented it at Nimrod's tower [the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11] at the end of ten years after the dispersal from the tower, and it is every one speaking the same language that went from there to his territory and not every one of the same kindred."[8] This invented language was entrusted to Góedel son of Angen, who was a Greek, but another of the disciples of Fénius was Cai Caínbrethach ('Fine-judging Cai'), who was of the Hebrews. As the text continues it rapidly becomes apparent that, though early speakers may have been Greek and Hebrew, and presumably from other nationalities, what mattered was the comparison between Irish and Latin. The text asserts the dignity of the Irish language, a dignity comparable with that of Latin; and this makes sense in the context of those inscriptions of the 5th and 6th centuries in Britain that placed Irish and Latin side by side on the same stones, and also in the context of the Old Irish glosses that reveal scholars who moved seamlessly from one language to the other.[9] It should be added that the *Auraicept* is deliberate in its choice of personal names: Fénius, the inventor of the language, bore a name formed from one name for the Irish, Féni, while Góedelc, the name of the Irish language, was, so the *Auraicept* correctly claimed, formed from Góedel (normally just 'Irishman' or 'Gael,' but here the personal name of the Greek entrusted with the Irish language). And, since the *Auraicept* was the work of a grammarian, Góedel was presumably entrusted with the language in the form of a book containing a grammar and a word-list. These names, Góedel and Góedelc, were readily extended to the Irish of Britain; and hence the modern Gáidhlig, the Gaelic of Scotland, alongside the modern Gaeilge, the Irish language. Also, although it was evidently a learned construction, it appealed to the fact that the word for 'language,' *bélrae* or *bérla*, was also used for a people. This linguistic sense of Irishness is comparable, in contemporary Europe, to the role of the French language in incorporating within the French nation those of foreign background who speak French—much closer than it is to the role of English in English nationality. As we have seen, the *Auraicept* explicitly denies that the speakers of Irish were united by a common descent.

The *Auraicept* thus flatly rejects the fundamental premise of the other story of Irishness, which I shall call 'The Milesian Legend,' since it claims that the Irish

8 Trans. Ahlqvist, *The Early Irish Linguist*, p. 47 (§ 1.3–4 of the text).

9 Paul Russell, "'What Was Best of Every Language', The Early History of the Irish Language," in Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, ed., *A New History of Ireland*, vol. 1, *Prehistoric and Early Ireland* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 405–06.

are all of the kindred of a man called Míl or, in Latin, *Miles Hispaniae*, literally 'a soldier of Spain.'[10] The Milesian Legend proper is only the final chapter of a more extended narrative that envisaged a series of settlements or occupations of Ireland, three in the *Historia Brittonum* version.[11] In this respect the story of the Irish was the opposite of that of the Britons: the Irish were the last wave of settlers, whereas the Britons were said to be the first settlers of Britain.[12] The difference was real, although the *Historia* mitigates it by claiming that the first settlers all died in a plague and the second abandoned Ireland and returned to Spain. A second origin story in the *Historia*, one attributed to "the most learned of the Irish," narrates the wanderings of their ancestors from Scythia to Egypt and then, having been expelled shortly after the exodus of the Jews, by a circuitous route eventually reaching Spain.[13] Máel Muru's version is more elaborate. In spite of the fundamental contradiction, it incorporates a version of the *Auraicept*'s story of Fénius, his language, and his school. Góedel is now a grandson of Fénius, not merely a pupil. Also, whereas the *Auraicept* placed Fénius in Egypt, according to Máel Muru he came from Scythia to Egypt.[14] Moreover, when the people of Israel, led by Moses, escaped from Egypt to undertake their long migration across the desert to the land of Canaan, the kindred of Nél grandson of Fénius escaped from Egypt aboard ship, down the Red Sea "past India, past Asia," back to Scythia from where Fénius had come. Subsequently they migrated again to Crete, Sicily, and then to Spain, ready for the final journey across the sea northwards, from Galicia to Ireland.

Before we consider this final settlement of Ireland, it will be helpful to compare the origin legend of the Britons, sometimes known as the Brutus legend, after their supposed ancestor.[15] The *Historia* presents two accounts

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10 "Miles Hispaniae," *Historia Brittonum*, c. 13. The first version of "The Book of the Settlement of Ireland" is translated by John Carey, in John T. Koch and John Carey, *The Celtic Heroic Age: Literary Sources for Ancient Celtic Europe and Early Ireland and Wales*, 4th ed. (Aberystwyth, 2003), pp. 226–71.

11 Ibid.

12 Bede, *HE* 1.1; *Historia Brittonum*, cc. 10–11.

13 *Historia Brittonum*, c. 15.

14 According to the linguistic ideas of the time, the link between Scythia and Scotti was easy: *t* was the unlenited partner of *th*, and Irish vowels were subject to change before an *i* in the following syllable. Scythia was already the land from which the Picts migrated according to Bede, *HE* 1.1, probably a symptom of the Irish origin of Bede's story: Gearóid Mac Eoin, "On the Irish Legend of the Origin of the Picts," *Studia Hibernica* 4 (1964), 138–54.

15 For Brittones and Brutus, cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae*, 9.2.102: "Brittones quidam Latine nominatos suspicantur, eo quod bruti sunt, gens intra Oceanum interfuso mari quasi extra orbem posita" (Some people think that the Britons acquired their name in Latin, inasmuch as they are brutish, a people situated within the Ocean, separated by the sea and thus, as it were, outside the world). Also 10.28 on Iunius Brutus, sister's son to Tarquin.

of the origin of the Britons. The first draws on "the Annals of the Romans," which must have contained a narrative outline of the events commemorated in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[16] It introduces a Britto son of Silvius son of Aeneas, who was expelled after he had killed his father by accident, and who founded the city of Tours in Gaul and then came to Britain.[17] Since Aeneas was a survivor of the sack of Troy, this story began in the eastern Mediterranean world, as did the narrative in the *Auraicept*. Whereas Góedel was a Greek, Britto belonged to the Trojan exiles in Italy: the British origin legend was tied into the Roman origin legend. The second legend of the Britons in the *Historia* was a version of the so-called Frankish Table of Nations (to be discussed further below), in which a descendant of Japheth son of Noah, Hessitio or Hisitio, had four sons, Francus, Romanus, Britto, Albanus; here, too, the Britons were aligned with the Romans, as well as with the Franks, who had their own Trojan origin legend.[18] One general conclusion is that the British origin legend, like the Frankish, derived from the Roman, but that the two Irish origin legends were much more deeply indebted to the Old Testament.

To understand the Milesian settlement of Ireland it is necessary to bring in the offshoot found in the great collections of genealogies.[19] In the extant copies, of which the earliest are in two 12th-century manuscripts, the arrangement has been more or less changed, but they derive from a collection that depended on the legend of an Ireland settled by the sons of Míl. What appears to be its beginning laments the carelessness of the Irish about their history and declares that the compiler will write down some of their deeds and will therefore commit to writing, apparently as a prologue to a history, the genealogies of the Irish, first those of Éremón, secondly the genealogies of Éber, thirdly those

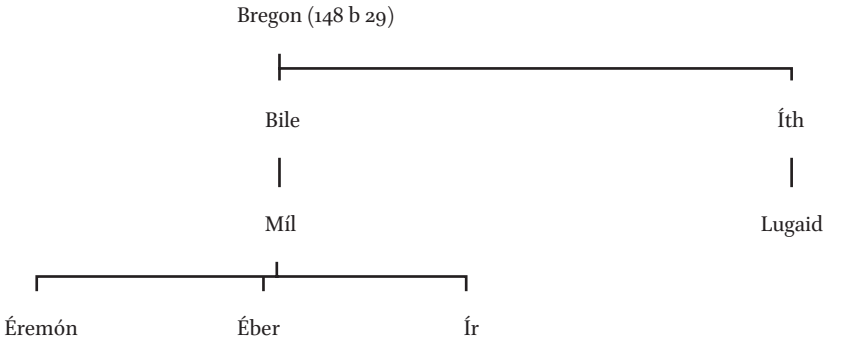
16 *Annales Romanorum* were also cited in the Collectio Canonum Hibernensis: *The Hibernensis: Book I, A Study and Edition*, ed. Roy Flechner (Washington, D.C., 2019), 62.2. Virgil is quoted by name in the *Historia*, c. 20 (from *Georgics* 3.25).

17 *Historia*, c. 10.

18 Walter Goffart, "The Supposedly "Frankish" Table of Nations: An Edition and Study," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 98–130, reprinted in Goffart, *Rome's Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp. 133–65, argued that the original Table was composed in Byzantium in the early 6th century.

19 Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies," in *History and Heroic Tale*, ed. Nyberg et al, pp. 51–96; idem, "Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," *Peritia* 12 (1998), 177–208; idem, "The Church and Secular Society," in *L'Irlanda e gli Irlandesi nell'alto medioevo*, Settiman di studio 57 (Spoleto, 2010), pp. 266–84. On the Insular tradition of genealogies, see Ben Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy: An Introduction and Textual Study* (Woodbridge, 2020), chap. 1.

of Ír, and finally those of Lugaid son of Íth.[20] The first three were sons of Míl, while Lugaid was Míl's cousin.



Leth Cuinn	Leth Moga	Ulaid	Corcu Loígde
= UíNéill	= Mumu	= Dál nAraidi	
+ Connachta		(falsely)	
+ Airgialla		Éber	
+ Laigin			
+ Dál Fíatach			

Éremón and Éber were described as "the two principal sons of Míl" and Ireland was divided between them, Éremón taking "the northern part with the monarchy," Éber taking the southern part.[21]

These origin legends are evidently learned constructions and scholars have identified debts to the Spanish writers, Orosius and Isidore, as well as to the Old Testament and the *Aeneid*.[22] They may seem to the modern reader to be artificial and likely to be remote from reality. That judgement could hardly be further from the truth: the issue, rather, is which reality they express. As we

20 *CGH* 192, together with 199 (148 b 28–29), 269 (156 a 25–30), and 333 (162 g 43). The method of reference used by the editor, O'Brien, and given above in parentheses, is to the page, column, and line of the facsimile: *Rawlinson B. 502*, ed. Kuno Meyer (Oxford, 1909). The manuscript itself is foliated, so that O'Brien's 156 a 25 is fol. 84va 25.

21 *CGH* p. 123.

22 The debt was effectively outlined by Eoin Mac Neill, *Phases of Irish History* (Dublin, 1920), pp. 90–95; A.G. Van Hamel, "On Lebor Gabála," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 10 (1914), p. 173, and Orosius, *Historiae aduersum Paganos*, ed. Zangemeister, 1.2, §§ 71, 75, and 80–81.

shall see, they encapsulate many of the central ideas underlying the political culture of the time in which they were composed.

The linguistic origin legend outlined in the *Auraicept* revealed an Irish language that constituted a nationality, but it also revealed a language that had migrated from the eastern Mediterranean to an island off the north-west coast of Europe. It was an immediate implication of this story that Irish and Irishness were not tied to the island of Ireland. In the Milesian Legend, however, there was a direct connection between the Irish people and the island which most of them inhabited. The whole story was of a series of settlements of the island, some peaceable, some not; and, as we have seen, the first thing the sons of Míl did was divide the island into two and assign the monarchy to Éremón and his descendants and thus to the northern half.

A way to appreciate the significance of the fundamental difference between the *Auraicept* and the Milesian Legend is to compare how the two stories might have been understood by an abbot of Iona and a bishop (or abbot) of Armagh shortly after they were first composed *c.*700. Columba, the founder of Iona, and his heir *c.*700, Adomnán, were Irish monks based outside Ireland and thus in exile. Yet, though they were based in Britain, they were living in an Irish settlement in what is now western Scotland. Fland Febla, bishop and abbot of Armagh (d. 715), laid claim to an archbishopric that covered the whole island of Ireland, an archbishopric that matched, and almost certainly imitated, the archbishopric of the island of Britain conferred on Theodore and his immediate successors up to 735.[23] For Armagh their island was their territory. They did not claim supremacy over the Irish of Britain. For Iona, on the other hand, it was not just that the Irish language could migrate—it had indeed migrated to Britain. It can help, therefore, to label the *Auraicept*'s story as a Gaelic origin legend, whereas the Milesian Legend was intrinsically Irish in a territorial sense, tied to the island.[24]

The significance of the Milesian Legend can be brought out by asking why Éremón and Éber were the two principal sons of Míl, why Ír mac Míled was therefore subordinate, and why, also, these three had a cousin, Lugaid mac Ítha. The answer lies in the political order—an order that was securely

23 *Liber Angeli*, ed. and trans. Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh* (Dublin, 1979), pp. 184–91; Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland*, pp. 427–38.

24 For the significance of the difference in the 9th century and later see Máire Herbert, "Sea-Divided Gaels? Constructing Relationships between Irish and Scots *c.*800–1169," in *Britain and Ireland 900–1300*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 87–97; eadem, "*Rí Éirenn, Rí Alban*: Kingship and Identity in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries," in *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles: Essays in Honour of Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson on the Occasion of her Ninetieth Birthday*, ed. Simon Taylor (Dublin, 2000), pp. 62–72.

established only in the middle third of the 7th century, a matter of a few decades before the likely date for the composition of the original *Auraicept* and of its Milesian counterpart (the latter no longer extant). It was based upon the domination of two groups of dynasties that claimed common descent and thus political alliance, Dál Cuinn, 'Conn's Share,' ruling Leth Cuinn, 'Conn's Half,' and Dál Moga, ruling Leth Moga. Leth Cuinn was the northern half, Leth Moga the southern half. The two halves were unequal: not only did the *monarchia*, the kingship of Tara, belong to Dál Cuinn, but Leinster, by geography in the southern half, was almost always in Leth Cuinn rather than in Leth Moga. Indeed, the inequality of the division became even more marked in 859, when Máel Gúala, king of Munster, was compelled to alienate Osraige, in the valley of the river Nore between Leinster and the rest of Munster, to Leth Cuinn.[25] A little earlier in the 9th century, however, Fedlimid mac Crimthainn, king of Munster, had briefly subjected Leinster and also the kingdoms of Fir Chell and Delbnae Bethra on the north side of Slieve Bloom, the mountainous area in the centre of Ireland.[26] This episode has its counterpart in origin legend, when it was claimed that the division between Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga should have been along Int Shlige Mór, 'The Great Highway' that used the Eiscir Ríadai, the esker running across the centre of Ireland from Dublin to the Atlantic coast a little to the south-east of Galway.[27] This division would place Leinster and also part of Fir Chell and Delbnae Bethra in Leth Moga, the southern half, the share of Éber son of Míl—precisely the territories subjected by Fedlimid to the overlordship of the king of Cashel. These 9th-century disputes between Leth Cuinn and Leth Moga show that origin legend was then the medium of political argument at the highest level. It is assumed that both halves of Ireland were composed of provinces. The argument was over which half should include Leinster as well as over the precise border between Munster and Mide (Meath).

Where Leinster belonged in the political order of Ireland was, therefore, a matter of dispute, and for good reason. One of the earliest pieces of evidence for the territorial conception of Irish nationality is in the great law book, *Senchas*

25 *AU* 859.3.

26 *AU* 838.6; 840.4; 841.5.

27 *Airne Fíngein*, ed. Joseph Vendryes (Dublin, 1953), p. 10 (ll. 132–33); "The Annals of Tigernach," ed. Whitley Stokes, *Revue celtique* 16 (1895), 374–419; 17 (1896), 6–33, 119–263, 337–420; 18 (1897), 9–59, 150–97, 267–303; reprinted in two vols (Felinfach, 1993), at "Second Fragment," p. 7 (= reprint, 1:51); "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," ed. Kuno Meyer, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 8 (1912), pp. 312–14. Similarly, in *Scéla Moshauluim*, ed. and trans. Máirín O Daly in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, Irish Texts Society 50 (1975), p. 74 (l. 522) places Leinster in Leth Moga.

Már, aligned with Armagh and with the legend of Patrick as the Apostle of all Ireland.[28] In the first tract after the old Introduction, a tract devoted to distraint, the origin of that part of the law was traced to a border meeting between the three noble peoples of the island, the Féni and the peoples of Ulster and Leinster.[29] The primary pair of sons of Míl, Éremón and Éber, are likely to have been understood as the ancestors of the Féni, one of the three peoples: the ascription of the Laigin, the Leinstermen, to the descendants of Éremón is likely to have been a later development of the legend, just as the third son, Ír, ancestor of the people of Ulster, did not participate in the primary division of the island between Éremón and Éber.

The implication of this relationship between the provinces and the whole island was that our first two levels of origin legend, the island and the province, were often combined. In one province, Ulster, all three levels were involved. Since, in the 8th century, Leinster and Ulster were part of Leth Cuinn, their principal ruling dynasties were made to descend from Éremón son of Míl.[30] In the case of Ulster, however, the genealogical scheme faced one serious difficulty. The province of Ulster was an exception among the provinces of Ireland: elsewhere those dynasties that had a share in the kingship of the province all claimed, whether truly or not, to belong to one overarching provincial ruling kindred. But the kingship of Ulster was shared between Dál Fíatach in the east of Co. Down, and the Cruithni, a group of peoples extending from the north coast near Coleraine southwards east of the Bann and Lough Neagh to the western part of Co. Down. Dál Fíatach were made to descend from Éremón, but the Cruithni were the descendants of his brother, Ír son of Míl. Moreover, they claimed to have been the first to settle the province, holding as their special portion Mag Line (the valley running down to the town of Antrim at the north-east of Lough Neagh).[31]

The historical context for the Cruithnian claim is shown by a section of the regnal list of Ulster. Cuib stands for Uí Echach Cobo (west Co. Down), North for the branch of Dál nAraidi that ruled Eilne, the northern kingdom, between the Bann and the Bush.

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28 Liam Breatnach, *The Early Irish Law Text "Senchas Már" and the Question of its Date*, E.C. Quiggin Memorial Lecture 13 (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 37–39. Breatnach dates the *Senchas Már* to *c.*660 × *c.*680; I would date it a little later to *c.*700.

29 *CIH* ii. 356.5–6.

30 *CGH* 4 (115 b 42), 6 (116 b 8), 358 (LL 318 b 38–40).

31 *CGH* 269.

1 Ulaid

Regnal List: *LL* 1:192–93 + SK = "Synchronismen der irischen Könige," ed. R. Thurneysen, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie*19 (1931–32), 81–99 + *Clann Ollaman Uaisle Emna*, ed. and trans. F.J. Byrne, *Studia Hibernica* 4 (1964), 54–94, + "The Laud Synchronisms," ed. K. Meyer, *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 9 (1913), 471–85, at 484–85. (C = Cruithni; DF = Dál Fíatach; LC = Leth Cathail; Uí E. = Uí Echach Cobo; Uí Ch. = Uí Chóelbad, a branch of the Cruithni.) Titles are taken from annalistic obits; those in italics are not in the main hand of AU before any additions. *LL* 2 × 3 stands for "In the *LL* regnal list nos. 2 and 3 appear in reverse order."

		Clann/LL			
No. in Byrne	*Reign*	*Obit*	*Dynasty*	*Title (if any)*	*Notes*
16. Fergus mac Áedáin	–/16	692	C (Cuib)	rex in Chóicid	
17. Bécc Bairche mac Blathmaic	27/24	abd. 707 † 718	DF		
18. Cú Chúaráin mac Dúngaile	2/2	708	C (North)	rex Cruithne	
19. Áed Rón	30/26	735	DF	rex Ulath	
20. Bressal mac Áeda	1/1	750	DF	SK –20	
21. Cathusach mac Ailella	16/16	749	C (North)	rex Cruithne	
22. Fiachna mac Áeda Róin	35/38	789	DF	rex Ulad	SK × 22, 23
23. Tommaltach mac Inrechtaig	2/10	790	C (Mag Line)	rí Dáil Araide	

According to the regnal lists, the Cruithni regularly shared the kingship of the province with Dál Fíatach from the late 7th century to the late 8th, the century during which the Milesian Legend was first being developed. The annalistic obits, however, show that some contemporaries were deeply reluctant to admit their full claims: none of these Cruithnian kings is designated 'king of the Ulaid' and only one is admitted to have been king of the province. One essential element in the claims made on behalf of the Cruithni was, as we have seen, priority of settlement: that they settled Ulster before Dál Fíatach implied that their claim to the kingship of the province was superior. That Mag Line was the first district settled had, however, another function: that, among the Cruithni, Uí Chóelbad, the ruling kindred of Mag Line, were superior to the others. Another essential element was that the Cruithni were 'the true Ulaid,' the Ulstermen of the legendary hero and king, Conchobor mac Nessa.[32] Here,

32 *CGH* 271–27, 280–85; for "the true Ulaid," see 275 (156 b 45).

again, origin legend was the medium of political argument, both between and within provinces.

As for Lugaid mac Ítha, the cousin of Éremón and Éber sons of Míl, his presence in the genealogical scheme was to account for the Corcu Loígde (of the south-west of Co. Cork) and other peoples. In the 9th-century version of the legend given by Máel Muru, Lugaid was the ancestor not just of Corcu Loígde but also of the Érainn, including the Múscraige, and Corcu Baiscinn.[33] He was thus ancestor of most of the ruling families of Munster that did not belong to the dominant Éoganachta.

The history of Ireland in the 6th century is uncertain, but a likely account sees the Uí Néill conquering the midlands in the early years of the century at the expense of the Leinstermen, and then the Éoganachta, perhaps aided by the Uí Néill, establishing their predominance in Munster later in the same century at the expense of the Érainn, including Corcu Loígde.[34] The last king of Tara for three and a half centuries not claimed to be a descendant of Éremón was killed in the Battle of Mag Roth in 637. The assured *monarchia* of Éremón was no older than that battle, won by Domnall mac Áeda, a kinsman of Columba, against Congal Cáech, a Cruithnian king and so someone who was not of the Féni and would be claimed to be a descendant of Ír, the third son of Míl.

Legend, as was its habit, moved the date backwards, first to the time of Cormac mac Airt, grandson of the Conn Cétchathach claimed as ancestor of the Connachta and Uí Néill, and then backwards again to the time of the sons of Míl. The Milesian Legend was, in effect, a foreshadowing of later events in legend, the kingship of Cormac mac Airt, and both were foreshadowings of 7th-century reality. These shifts in time secured the kingship of Tara as it was established only after 637 in, first, the early generations of the descendants of Conn, and then back again in the original settlement of the island. The earliest extant text in the cycle of stories centred on Cormac is likely to belong to much the same period as the *Auraicept* and the presumed original Milesian Legend.[35] Some form of the tale, however, is likely to be somewhat older than the Milesian Legend. It is a story about the triumph of the true and just heir to the kingship, Cormac, over a usurper, Mac Con, who belonged to the Corco Loígde, and who had killed Cormac's father, Art mac Cuinn, and the latter's

33 *LL* 3:522 (ll. 16131–32).

34 Francis John Byrne, *The Rise of the Uí Néill and the High Kingship of Ireland*, O'Donnell Lecture (Dublin, 1969); T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Early Christian Ireland* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 441–58, 489–91.

35 *Scéla Éogain ocus Cormaic*, ed. and trans. Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac mac Airt* (Dublin, 1977), pp. 119–27, or ed. and trans. O Daly, *Cath Maige Mucrama*, pp. 64–73.

ally, Éogan mac Ailella Auluimm, ancestor of the Éoganachta. Mac Con had won the kingship of Tara in battle; but Cormac won it back by a just judgement that corrected the unjust judgement given by Mac Con. The implication was that the kingship of Tara after 637 was founded on justice rather than on force.

Others disagreed. An Old Irish origin legend from Munster claimed that the three grandsons of the ancestor of the Osraige (then in East Munster) were the first to set up house-posts in Tara. At the same time "the second Míl of Spain" landed in Ireland, and his descendants "spread in the land and carried out a great harrying and so took land there by the sword. It is thus that, subsequently, they have taken power, and it will always be like that, they take lordship by force. Their offspring is Dál Cuinn and Dál Fíatach."[36] This text is evidently based on the Milesian Legend, but seeks to subvert it by inventing a second Míl of Spain. It may be dated with some probability, to the reign of Fedlimid mac Crimthainn in Munster (820–47)—or, to judge by the role of Osraige, slightly later, 847–88, the reign of the Osraige king Cerball mac Dúnlaige, the Kjarvalr Írakonungr of the Icelandic sagas. Fedlimid, as we have seen, asserted, for a few years, the right of the kings of Munster to overlordship over Leinster and the southern kingdoms of Mide.

An earlier criticism of the basis of Uí Néill power is in the *Vita prima* of Brigit, a woman, a former slave, and the greatest saint of Leinster, a combination of the greatest interest. This life is likely to belong to the 7th century and may be earlier than the *Auraicept* and the Milesian Legend.[37] Conall Cremthainne was the ancestor of the southern Uí Néill. According to the *Vita prima* his queen was childless until she sought the intercession of Brigit. However, Brigit only communicated with her through a nun. The latter asked Brigit:[38]

> "Why is it you don't ask the Lord for the queen to have a son, whereas you often ask him on behalf of the wives of the common folk?"
>
> And Brigit said, "Because all the common folk are servants and they all call upon their Father, but the sons of kings are serpents and sons of blood and sons of death apart from a few who are chosen by God. But since the queen entreats us, go and tell her, 'There will be offspring but it will be offspring that sheds blood and will be an accursed stock and will hold sway for many years.'" And so it was.

36 "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," ed. Meyer, p. 313.

37 I am following the dating defended by Richard Sharpe, "*Vitae S. Brigidae*: The Oldest Texts," *Peritia* 1 (1982), 81–106.

38 *Vita prima*, trans. Seán Connolly, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, 119 (1989), 14–49, at § 62.

The saint's life and the origin legend have the same message, but one places it in the remote past, while the life tells a story closer to the 7th-century present, but still about the ancestors of dynasties. The difference is only a matter of degree.

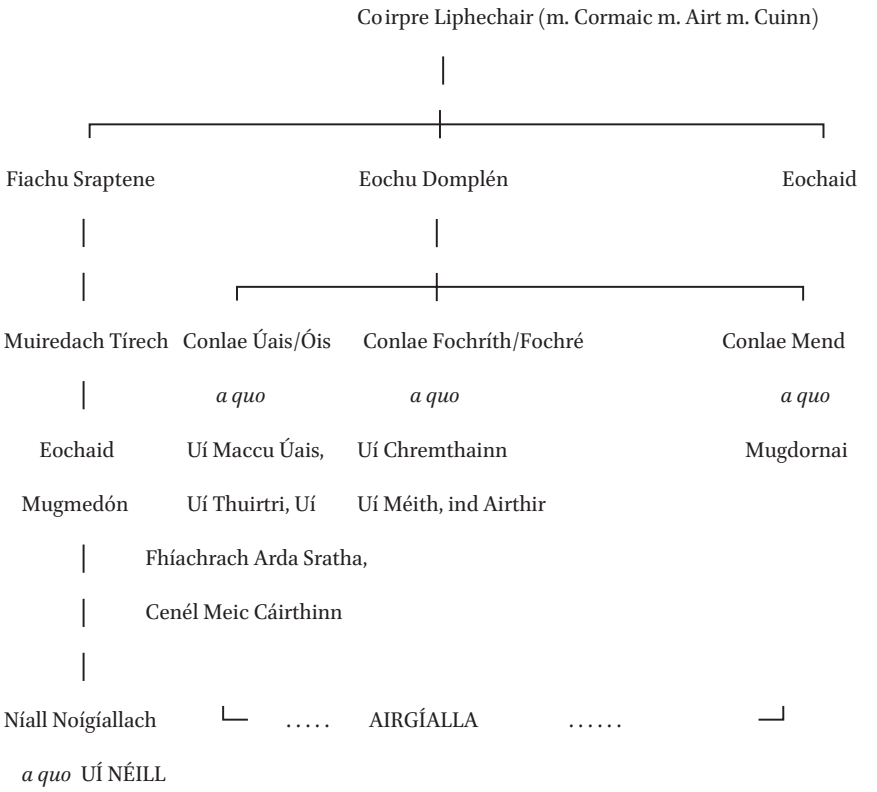
A similar assault on the moral credentials of Uí Néill kingship is contained in a Leinster origin legend set in a period intermediate between the sons of Míl and the time of Cormac mac Airt.[39] The tale takes it for granted that the rulers of Leinster belonged by descent to Dál Cuinn and thus that Leinster belonged to Leth Cuinn. Two brothers were kings of neighbouring kingdoms: Cobthach the Thin of Brega, the province that included Tara, and Lóegaire Lorc of Leinster. The story thus accepts that the two brothers belonged to the one branch of the descendants of Míl. Cobthach was jealous of Lóegaire and of his kingdom, Leinster. By a treacherous stratagem Cobthach killed Lóegaire, but the latter left a son, Ailill, who succeeded to the kingdom. "Cobthach was not content with the first kin-slaying, and he bribed someone with silver to give Ailill a poisoned drink," and Ailill died as a result, enabling Cobthach to take the kingship of Leinster. But Ailill had left a son, Labraid, whom Cobthach drove into exile after the poet Craptine at the Feast of Tara had declared Labraid to be a man even more generous than the king. Eventually he would return, recover the kingship of Leinster and, later, take a savage vengeance on Cobthach and his companions by inviting them to a feast in an iron house, locking them in, kindling fires around it, and cooking his enemies to death inside. Kin-slaying deserved no less.

Kin-slaying may have been common in royal dynasties, but in origin legends, as in hagiography, it was an offence fatal to the slayer's claim to kingship.[40] That this motif was well established would have affected how a contemporary would have understood the story of Cobthach the Thin and Labraid Loingsech in *Orgain Denna Ríg*. A classic example is in a text that illustrates the uses of origin legends below even the level of a province. The story of "The Three Collas," probably a text of the late 9th century, is contained in several genealogical collections. The issue was the political status of the Airgíalla, a group of peoples and kingdoms within the province then called 'The North' (namely, northern Ireland west of the river Bann). Even though we are now below the level of a province, the argument is over the relationship between the Airgíalla and the kingship of Tara, namely the *monarchia* of the whole island. The story

39 *Orgain Denna Ríg*, ed. David Greene, *Fingal Rónáin and Other Stories* (Dublin, 1955), pp. 16–26. For discussion: Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "The Oldest Story of the Laigin: Observations on *Orgain Denna Ríg*," Éigse 33 (2002), 1–18.

40 A hagiographical example is in Adomnán's *Life of Columba*, ed. Alan Orr Anderson and Marjorie Ogilvie Anderson, *Adomnan's Life of Columba* (London, 1961; rev. ed., Oxford Medieval Texts, 1991), and trans. Richard Sharpe, *Adomnán of Iona: Life of St Columba*, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth, 1995), 1.14.

was set in the generation of Cormac mac Airt's grandsons and two generations before Níall Noígíallach, ancestor of the Uí Néill.[41]



The Airgíalla were a collection of peoples inhabiting the central northern portion of the island between the Foyle and Lough Erne in the west and the river Bann and Lough Neagh in the east. They became crucial to the power of Cenél nÉogain (originally of Inishowen on the west side of Lough Foyle) after the latter had, between 732 and 734 defeated their neighbours, Cenél Conaill, and so acquired a long-lasting predominance among the northern Uí Néill. The story of the Three Collas supplied a narrative to explain why the ruling dynasties of the Airgíalla were close kinsmen of the Uí Néill, and yet had no share in the kingship of Tara. It accompanied an earlier poem that laid out the terms of the relationship between the Airgíalla and the Uí Néill. Although this "Airgíalla Charter Poem" as it has been called, embodies a bargain between the Airgíalla and all branches of the

41 Versions in print are *CGH* 139–53 (from Rawlinson B 502), 181–85, *LL* 6:1454–56, Laud Gen. 317–19; trans. M.A. O'Brien, "The Oldest Account of the Raid of the Collas (circa AD 330)," *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, 3rd ser. 2 (1939), 170–77.

Uí Néill, their prime loyalty was to Cenél nÉogain.[42] These texts and the very conception of the Airgíalla as a group with a shared genealogical basis may all be subsequent to the rise of Cenél nÉogain to supremacy in the North.[43]

According to the story of "The Three Collas," Fíachu Sraiptine, grandson of Cormac mac Airt, was the current king of Tara but was growing old. He had a son, Muiredach Tírech and three nephews, sons of his brother Eochu Domplén. All four were potential successors to the kingship. Muiredach was Fíachu's 'enforcer of sovereignty' and led a campaign into Leth Moga, in which he succeeded in taking the hostages of Munster. While he was on this campaign, his father was at Dubchommar, 'The Dark Confluence,' to the south of Tailtiu at the confluence of the Boyne and the Blackwater. His nephews had another army on a hill nearby. When the news came through of Muiredach's victory in Munster, everyone was saying, "this Muiredach is material of a king," namely worthy to succeed as king. But the three Collas said among themselves,

> "What shall we do? The kingship is eluding us. This Fíachu is king, and everyone is saying, 'It is his son who will be king after him'. We have a good plan: let us give battle to this old king and the army will desert him and will come over to us before Muiredach arrives, and we shall give battle to him should he come."

Fíachu, however, had a druid, who said to the king,

> "I can ensure that you are victorious, but it will have this result: if you are victorious you will commit kin-slaying on your brother's sons. You will then be king, but there will never be a king of your descendants. But if you are defeated, kin-slaying will be committed against you, and from you will descend the kingship of Ireland for ever. Choose one of them."

Fíachu chose death for himself and the kingship for his descendants.[44]

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42 "The Airgíalla Charter Poem," ed. and trans. Edel Bhreathnach and Kevin Murray, in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, ed. Edel Bhreathnach (Dublin, 2005), pp. 124–58, with accompanying discussion at pp. 95–123. This poem is likely to belong to the 8th century, whereas "The Three Collas" probably belongs to the late 9th or early 10th century.

43 Edel Bhreathnach, "The Airgíalla Charter Poem: The Political Context," in *The Kingship and Landscape of Tara*, ed. Bhreathnach, pp. 95–99. Entries in which the Airgíalla are named and which appear in both *AU* and the Clonmacnois family of chronicles are confined to the 9th century.

44 *CGH* pp. 148–49. Cf. the translation in O'Brien, "The Oldest Account of the Raid of the Collas," pp. 173–75.

A second part of the story explained how the Airgíalla gained the land they subsequently inhabited. They allied with the Connachta and defeated the Ulstermen in seven days of fighting in Fernmag and thus made 'sword-land' of the territory as far east as Glenn Ríge. The final rout of the Ulstermen on the seventh day was "the battle of the Collas. No boast was violated in that battle. The battle was fought throughout a summer day and a summer night till the blood reached their waists."[45] The claim was that this decisive victory over the Ulstermen was won, not by the ancestors of the Uí Néill, but by their allies and kinsmen, by those outside the *rígrad*, the royal lineage. The context is illustrated by the casualty list in the greatest defeat of Cenél nÉogain in the 8th century, the Battle of Serethmag in 743, in which, apart from Áed Allán, king of Cenél nÉogain and of Tara, the other kings killed in that battle were all of the Airgíalla.[46]

An origin legend that exemplifies several fundamental principles operating within a province is the story of Conall Corc and the Corcu Loígde.[47] This is likely to have been written early in the 8th century at the monastery of Cloyne (now in East Co. Cork). It is a prime example of argument between the ruling lineages of a province, in this case the Éoganachta of Munster. The target was Éoganacht Locha Léin, the leading dynasty of West Munster, and the intention was to exclude them from the kingship of Cashel, the royal seat of the entire province. The common ancestor of all the Éoganachta was Conall Corc (or Corc mac Luigdech). He had been driven into exile in Britain, where he was given the daughter of the king of the Picts as his wife; she bore him two sons, ancestors of the Éoganacht kings of Loch Léin and of the Éli of north Munster. Subsequently Corc returned to Ireland unaccompanied by his Pictish wife, took first the kingship of Ireland and then the kingship of Munster. There, in Cashel, he acquired a new wife, Aímend, from the Dáirine, alias the Érainn of Munster, who bore him five sons. She had a dream in which it seemed to her that she was a bird and had given birth to chicks. Three flew from the nest into South Munster, one into mid-Munster. The fifth remained in the nest. A sixth bird settled to the west of them. She told her dream to a druid, who explained that the bird that settled in the west was

45 *CGH* pp. 151–52. Cf. the translation in O'Brien, "The Oldest Account of the Raid of the Collas," p. 176.

46 *AU* 743.4.

47 "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," ed. Kuno Meyer, in O.J. Bergin *et al.*, *Anecdota from Irish Manuscripts*, vol. 3 (Halle, 1910), pp. 57–63; trans. Vernam Hull, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America* 62 (1947), 887–909. Corrections and additions in Vernam Hull, "On Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 27 (1958/59), 64–74.

"the son of the Pictish woman." The prophecy was fulfilled when "the son of the Pictish woman," Coirpre, came across the sea from Britain, acquired horses in the north, and arrived at Cashel as a party of 30 horsemen. There he unyoked his horses to graze in a field of corn and, when the king's steward removed them from the field, Coirpre rose up and slew the steward.[48] For this act of unmerited violence Corc cursed Coirpre and sent him into West Munster.

One might suppose that this should have been the end of any claim by Coirpre and his descendants to the kingship of Munster, but in fact several of them did secure the kingship. The slaying of the steward was evidence deployed in an argument, and we may presume that different stories were told on behalf of Coirpre's descendants, Éoganacht Locha Léin.

Another kind of argument turned on the mothers of Corc's sons. The Pictish woman was a foreigner, even though she was the daughter of a king. The mother of the other sons, Aímend, was a native of Munster and belonged to the dynasty and people that the Éoganachta had supplanted in power. Yet another text, one already cited, *Scéla Moshauluim*, claimed that the Éoganachta did not have a monopoly of the kingship of Cashel, at least in legend: the ancestors of the Éoganachta and of the Corco Loígde had alternated in power, so that when one held the kingship, the other would supply the judge of the province; and the next time the positions would be reversed.[49] This argument based on alternation would, in the 10th century, provide the model for a major innovation in the legendary history of Munster, an innovation necessitated by an actual change in the distribution of power culminating in Brian Boru's 'empire of the Irish.' His ancestors came from a minor kingdom north of Limerick, but now, as Dál Cais, they claimed to have alternated in kingship with the Éoganachta already in the remote past.[50]

British origin legends were fundamentally different from the Irish at the national level, but similar in many ways once one descends to the level of province and kingdom. The dominant British origin legend, already in the *Historia Brittonum*, was an offshoot, ultimately of the Trojan origin legend of the Romans, canonized in Virgil's *Aeneid* but older than Virgil in date. More immediately the British legend emulated, but with fundamental differences,

48 For the legal context of this episode see *Corpus iuris Hibernici*, ed. D.A. Binchy (Dublin, 1979), 2:578.10–18.

49 *Scéla Moshauluim* § 3, in *Cath Maige Mucrama*, ed. O Daly, p. 74.

50 *CGH* 206; John V. Kelleher, "The Rise of Dál Cais," in *North Munster Studies: Essays in Honour of Mgr. Moloney*, ed. E. Rynne (Limerick, 1967), pp. 230–41.

the Trojan origin legend of the Franks. Even before the Franks, the Gauls had adopted the Trojan legend. The first attestation is in the late 4th-century history of Ammianus Marcellinus: "Some say that after the destruction of Troy a few of those who fled from the Greeks and were scattered everywhere occupied these parts of the world, which were then deserted" (namely Gaul).[51] This was only one of the stories about the origins of the Gauls said by Ammianus to have been current by his day. By the late 6th century, the period of Gregory of Tours and Venantius Fortunatus, the Gauls were considered, by themselves and others, to be Romans. They had largely shed their Gaulish identity. The extension of the Trojan origin legend from Romans to Franks had thus occurred in two stages, first to the Gauls (subsequently Gallo-Romans), and then to the Franks. The effect was to link two peoples whose cooperation was essential to Frankish kingship at least from Clovis's reign and, arguably, from his father's time. The significance of all this for the Britons—in the first place the Britons settled in Gaul—is clear from the 7th-century geography of northern Gaul as assumed by the *First Life* of Samson of Dol. For this text the territory neighbouring Brittany to the east was Romania, which extended from the Breton frontier at least as far as the Seine. In the 6th century, for Gregory of Tours, Francia was primarily the territory in north-eastern Gaul and Lower Germany. A traveller from Dol to Rouen and on to Tournai and Cologne would leave *Brittania*, go through *Romania*, and, after crossing the Seine, proceed through *Francia*.[52]

This same geography may underlie a sentence in a short text thought to have been composed in the eastern empire early in the 6th century, but which became popular in Frankish Gaul and thus acquired the name "The Frankish Table of Nations." A version of this text was incorporated into the *Historia Brittonum* and its impact in Ireland is clear from the genealogies.[53] We know from a letter of Theudebert I, king of the eastern Franks, that Justinian was enquiring about the peoples of Europe beyond his borders to the north-west.[54]

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51 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, 15.9.5 (ed. John C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA, 1963), 1:178). For the Frankish legend see Eugen Ewig, "Le mythe troyen et l'histoire des Francs," in *Clovis, histoire et mémoire*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1997), pp. 817–48, repr. in his collected studies, *Spätantikes und Fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 3 (ed. Matthias Becher, Theo Kölzer and Ulrich Nonn, Beihefte der Francia, 3.3 (Ostfildern, 2009)), pp. 11–41. For the history of the Trojan origin legend, see chapters 7 (Reimitz), 8 (Clarke), and 14 (Fulton) in this volume.

52 T.M. Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons, 350–1064* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 238–39.

53 Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations"; Patrick Wadden, "The Frankish Table of Nations in Insular Historiography," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 72 (2016), 1–31. Where the *Historia* had "Albanus," the original had "Alamannos."

54 *Epistolae Austrasicae*, ed. Wilhelmus Gundlach, in *Epistolae Merowingici et Karolini Aevi*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH (Berlin, 1892), no. 20.

The Frankish Table of Nations was based on the conception of the origins of peoples in the Book of Genesis, chapter 10. Political links in the present were expressed through shared descent in the past. One such link was between the descendants of Istio: "Istio begot the Romans, the Britons, the Franks, the Alamans"; but in the *Historia Brittonum* this became, "Hissitio had four sons; these are Francus, Romanus, Britto, Albanus."[55] The *Historia*'s Albanus in place of Alamannus presumably derived from Virgilian traditions of Alba Longa founded by Aeneas rather than from the later expression 'Men of Alba,' *Fir Alban*, namely of Scotland, since the latter was only current from *c*.900, and also rather than from the Albani by the Caucasus Mountains, too remote to make sense in this company.[56] The original version displayed the Franks and the peoples of Gaul and the Rhineland under Frankish overlordship after Clovis's defeat of the Alamans but before the conquest of Burgundy in 534. It is unclear when, in the period between the 6th and the 9th centuries, the Trojan origin legend spread from Romans and Franks in Gaul to the Britons, but it is more likely than not, given the geography of northern Gaul, that it spread first to the Britons of Brittany and then to the Insular Britons. The more popular versions of the legend in its Frankish form proved to be in the early 8th-century *Liber historiae Francorum* rather than the two earlier versions in *Fredegar's Chronicle*, initially compiled in Burgundy in the mid-7th century but with additions up to 768.[57]

The narrative structure of the *Historia* differs from both Fredegar's two versions and from the *Liber historiae Francorum*. In all three accounts of the Trojan origins of the Franks, the escape of their ancestors from Troy had nothing to do with Aeneas and his voyage, first to Carthaginian Africa and then to Sicily and on to Italy. There is thus no mention of Aeneas's foundation of Alba Longa. In the *Historia*, however, Britto was a son of Ascanius son of Aeneas, was expelled from Italy, and came *via* Tours to Britain. In their origin legends the Franks kept the Romans at arm's length, sharing a Trojan origin but little more. The British version of the legend proposed a much closer connection between Britons and Romans. The *Historia*'s version may be indebted to a Frankish version, just as its attestation is certainly later, but that only throws into sharper relief the

55 Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations," in his *Rome's Fall and After*, pp. 147, 150.

56 As in Orosius, *Historiae aduersum Paganos*, 1.2, §§ 36 and 39 (ed. Carl Zangemeister, CSEL 5 (Vienna, 1882), p. 18). The *Historia*'s Albanus was presumably the source of the Albáin of *CGH* 7 (116 b 38) and 202 (149 a 4).

57 Richard A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 3 and 11–30, with a translation of the relevant chapters at pp. 173–74. The relevant passages of Fredegar are translated at pp. 14–16.

quite different message contained in the narrative. Perhaps the *Historia*'s version was closer to the Gaulish one mentioned by Ammianus than to the Frankish variant. Nothing in British historiography resembles the onslaught on the Roman past contained in the Longer Prologue to the Frankish *Lex Salica*, even though both the *Historia Brittonum* and the Longer Prologue refer to the hard yoke of Roman rule.[58]

Quite apart from Trojan origins, British history was far more prone to favour links with the Roman past. Two figures were crucial but in quite different ways: the Emperor Magnus Maximus, in medieval Welsh tradition Macsen Wledig, and St Germanus of Auxerre. Traditions about Magnus Maximus became entwined with those about Constantine, the Empress Helena, Maximianus, and Constantius.[59] The *Historia Brittonum* was composed in Gwynedd, in north Wales, but interest in Magnus Maximus and Germanus is also attested in an inscription commissioned by a king of Powys on a cross in north-east Wales close to the later Cistercian abbey of Valle Crucis, which was named from the monument. The cross was erected in the first half of the 9th century, a period within which the *Historia* also belongs.[60] The current state of the inscription is such that it is illegible, but fortunately those parts that could then be read were copied twice in the 17th century. The first part of the inscription contained a genealogy of Cyngen, the king of Powys who commissioned the inscription, back to his great-grandfather Eliseg. This genealogy is also known as part of a royal line of descent pertaining to Powys in the Harleian Genealogies, a collection of British royal pedigrees that was itself probably compiled in the 9th century, but of which the surviving text derives from a mid-10th-century revision.[61] The *Historia Brittonum* contains a story about the ancestor of this Powysian lineage, Cadell, after whom they came to be known as the Cadelling.[62]

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58 *Historia Brittonum*, c. 30; *Lex Salica*, ed. Karl August Eckhardt, MGH, Legum sectio 1, Legum nationum Germanicarum 4.2 (Hanover, 1969), pp. 2–8.

59 J.F. Matthews, "Macsen, Maximianus and Constantine," *Welsh History Review*, 11 (1982–83), 431–48; Ben Guy, "Constantine, Helena, Maximus: On the Appropriation of Roman History in Medieval Wales, *c*. 800–1250," *Journal of Medieval History* 44 (2018), 381–405.

60 Nancy Edwards, "Rethinking the Pillar of Eliseg," *Antiquaries Journal* 89 (2009), 1–35; Owain Wyn Jones, "*Hereditas Pouoisi*: The Pillar of Eliseg and the History of Early Powys," *Welsh History Review* 24, no. 4 (2009), 41–80; Nancy Edwards, *A Corpus of Early Medieval Inscribed Stones and Stone Sculpture in Wales*, vol. 3, *North Wales* (Cardiff, 2013), pp. 322–36 (D3: Llandysilio-yn-Iâl 1).

61 "The St Davids Recension," § 27, in Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, p. 337; HG § 27 in *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. P.C. Bartrum (Cardiff, 1966), p. 12; Ben Guy, "The Textual History of the Harleian Genealogies," *Welsh History Review* 28 (2016), 1–25.

62 *Historia Brittonum*, cc. 32–35.

In the middle years of the 12th century the kingdom of Powys had core lands in the Severn valley between the river Rhiw and the English border, the tributaries of the Severn, and the Dee valley between Corwen and the English border. These were all ruled by Madog ap Maredudd (d. 1160), who belonged to a lineage called the Lleision. Two territories in the upper Severn valley, Cedewain and Arwystli, were ruled by branches of another lineage, the Iorweirthion. Further branches of that lineage ruled the lands between the Severn and the Wye.[63] Between the late 9th and the late 10th centuries Powys was subsumed in Gwynedd, which makes it difficult to establish the political situation of the kingdom in the first half of the 9th century, the period of the Pillar of Eliseg. Twelfth-century Powys was a reconstruction of a kingdom then three centuries in the past, but a reconstruction that explicitly associated itself with that past—a past commemorated in the inscription on the Pillar, then presumably legible in its entirety.[64] In the early 9th century, according to the *Historia Brittonum*, the Cadelling had been the ruling dynasty of Powys ever since their ancestor, Cadell, welcomed St Germanus, although the king, the tyrant Benlli, refused to allow him to enter his gate; but in the region between Wye and Severn there was another dynasty descended from Vortigern from whom a dynasty and territory within that region was called Gwerthrynion/Gwrtheyrnion, 'Descendants of Vortigern.'[65] In the inscription on the Pillar of Eliseg, the portion immediately before the concluding clauses runs: "Britu was the son of Vortigern whom Germanus blessed, and whom Sevira bore to him, the daughter of King Maximus who killed the king of the Romans," namely the Emperor Gratian.

Germanus, according to his 5th-century life, rescued the British church from the Pelagians and led the Britons to a victory over the Saxons; but in the *Historia* he was a Christian missionary converting and blessing the ancestors of later kings, just like St Patrick in his Lives. And, indeed, in Muirchú's late 7th-century life of Patrick, Patrick was a disciple of Germanus, "as Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel."[66] Narratives of conversion in Ireland and Britain were frequently

63 T.M. Charles-Edwards, "Dynastic Succession in Early Medieval Wales," in *Wales and the Welsh in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to J. Beverley Smith*, ed. R.A. Griffiths and P.R. Schofield (Cardiff, 2011), pp. 80–84.

64 David Stephenson, "The 'Resurgence' of Powys in the Late Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 30 (2008), 182–95; idem, "Madog ap Maredudd, *Rex Powyssensium*," *Welsh History Review* 24, no. 1 (2008), 1–28.

65 *Historia Brittonum*, cc. 32–35 (Cadell), 47–49 (Vortigern/Gwrtheyrn and Gwerthrynion).

66 Muirchú, *Vita S. Patricii*, 1.6, in *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, ed. and trans. Ludwig Bieler (Dublin, 1979), p. 70. The New Testament reference is to Acts 22:3.

origin legends of early medieval royal dynasties. A list of the kings of Ireland might stretch far back into the pre-Christian past, before Patrick, but a new section began with Lóegaire son of Níall, the king whom Patrick confronted in Tara, the Babylon of the Irish, and whose descendants were excluded from the kingship of Tara.[67] According to the law tract *Córus Bésgnai* (*c.*700), Corc, the ancestor of the Éoganachta of Munster, was a hostage at Lóegaire's Tara, when the great confrontation took place between the saint and the king with his druids.[68] Whereas Lóegaire rejected Patrick, it was Corc "who first bowed down to him."

A common theme in Irish origin legends was migration. The Milesian Legend was itself a story of migration, as was the linguistic origin legend in the *Auraicept*. Later in the scheme of pre-Christian history, however, migration becomes an explanation of why a dynasty and people were deprived of a share in the kingship of the province.[69] Migration was also essential as an explanation for why some peoples were scattered. The prime example is the origin legend of the Déssi of Munster, who are said to have been driven from Tara after one of their ancestors, Óengus, had killed a son of Cormac mac Airt in revenge for that son's rape of Óengus's niece.[70] The legend explained why the Déssi of Munster, as immigrants, had no share in the kingship of that province, but also why there were Déssi in Brega, vassals of the Uí Néill. In the same way, the ancestor of the Fothairt was claimed to be a brother of Conn Cétchathach, ancestor of the Uí Néill, but to have migrated to Leinster.[71] Migration was typically linked with conquest. In the story of the Three Collas, loss of the kingship of Tara was combined with territorial conquest of Ulster territory between Loch Erne and Glenn Ríge. This sword-land subsequently became the territory of the Airgíalla, just as conquest was an essential element in the legend of the Déssi. In both the starting point was an act of violence, even though, for the Déssi, it was a justifiable act of revenge. It should be noted that exile followed by a return to the native province had no harmful effect on claims to the

67 Ibid. 1.15, p. 84; *CGH* 123–25 divides the *nomina incredentium* from the *nomina credentium*.

68 *Córus Bésgnai: An Old Irish Law Tract on the Church and Society*, ed. and trans. Liam Breatnach, Early Irish Law Series 7 (Dublin, 2017), § 32.

69 *CGH* p. 138 (140 b 30–37), states the principle with examples.

70 *Tairired na nDésse/Tochomlad na nDésse a Temraig*, ed. and trans. Kuno Meyer, "The Expulsion of the Déssi," *Y Cymmrodor* 14 (1901), 101–35, at §§ 1–6. For a discussion of this text, see Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, "The Expulsion of the Déisi," *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 110 (2005), 13–20.

71 *CGH* 79–80.

kingship: examples were Conall Corc, ancestor of the Éoganachta, and Labraid Loingsech, 'Labraid the exile,' ancestor of the kings of Leinster.[72]

In British texts, however, migration did not have the same implication for political status. The royal dynasties of Gwynedd were traced to a migration by Cunedda and his sons from Manaw Gododdin, the district including Falkirk on the south side of the Forth and Clackmannan on the north.[73] This legend had two functions: in the *Historia Brittonum* it was the story of how the Britons expelled the Irish from Wales; in the Harleian Genealogies it was also the foundation legend of the kingdom of Gwynedd, distinguishing its north-western core from peripheral territories and explaining how two dynasties shared the kingship of Gwynedd in the late 8th and early 9th centuries.[74] Cunedda should have lived about 400 C.E.: for that date and a couple of centuries afterwards the first message—the expulsion of the Irish—was quite false, as the ogam inscriptions of Wales (in an early form of Irish) demonstrate. But once the Irish settlers had been assimilated to a British population it acquired a contemporary truth: by 700 the population of western Britain was composed largely of monoglot speakers of British. As for the second message, it was true only for a date about four hundred years after Cunedda's supposed lifetime. As with the Irish origin legends, the story of Cunedda worked by shifting a contemporary or recent situation centuries into the past.

Royal dynasties in both Ireland and Wales tended to recognize one line of descent as the royal lineage, what the Irish called the *rígrad*, 'the royals.' In the greater kingdoms cadet lines might have subordinate kingships over particular areas, but it was very rare for a royal lineage to be supplanted in power by a cadet line. The preference given to the royal lineage was often explained by a story about some offence committed by ancestors of cadet lines excluded from the kingship: as we have seen, the three Collas lost the kingship of Tara by committing kin-slaying.[75] In Patrician hagiography, the story was usually that one brother rejected Patrick, whereas another welcomed him.[76] The story in

72 "Conall Corc and the Corco Luigde," as n. 45 above; *Orgain Denna Ríg*, as n. 39 above; P. Wadden, "Church, Apostle and Nation," *Medieval Worlds* 5 (2017), 149, on early 7th century poetic references to Labraid, in which Labraid may have been seen as an invader rather than one who returned from exile.

73 *Historia Brittonum*, cc. 14 and 62; "St Davids Recension," §§ 32–33, ed. Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, p. 337; HG §§ 32–33 in Bartrum, *Early Welsh Genealogies*, p. 13.

74 Charles-Edwards, *Wales and the Britons*, pp. 475–78.

75 *Orgain Denna Ríg*, therefore, discussed above, undermined Uí Néill claims to the kingship of Tara and supremacy over the Leinstermen.

76 For example, Conall and Coirpre, sons of Níall, in Tírechán, *Collectanea*, §§ 9–10, ed. Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh*, p. 132, and the kingship of Dál nAraidi

Genesis of the half-brothers Jacob and Esau, and how the elder brother, Esau, sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, had numerous counterparts in Irish narrative tradition. And in the Irish stories as in Genesis the effects of past deeds were not merely felt by the person who did them but were transmitted to his descendants. The Airgíalla were excluded from the kingship of Tara by the sin of their ancestors, the three Collas: once Jacob had received from Isaac his father the blessing intended for Esau, the effect could not be undone and Esau's descendants did not belong to the chosen people but were a separate nation, the people of Edom. Blessings and curses modelled on those of Genesis formed the content of "The Testament of Cathaír Már": as Jacob excluded his firstborn, Reuben, from pre-eminence among his sons, "because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it" (Gen. 49:4), so Eochu Timíne was excluded from the inheritance because he had had sex with his father's wife.[77]

The underlying Irish background was, first, that competition for the kingship was endemic and, secondly, that once a contender in one generation had failed in this competition—and a serious offence would be likely to be fatal in such a competition—his descendants were most unlikely to reverse his failure.[78] Such ancestral failures had an effect on the status of the descendants: they were excluded from 'the royals,' the *rígrad*. This principle was pervasive: a church might cease to be a free church and be subjected to tribute because of the bad behaviour of the head of the church. The *Hibernensis* was anxious, however, to claim that such subjection should not continue under subsequent heads, assuming that their conduct was virtuous.[79] The *Hibernensis*, therefore, was attempting to prevent a principle widely acknowledged, when royal dynasties were the issue, from being applied to churches.

Three ideas formed the assumptions behind the mixture of accepted doctrine and contentious argument in Irish origin legends. First, it was taken for granted that Ireland was the land of the Irish, even though they might settle outside the island. Secondly, the dynastic identity of kingdoms and peoples was taken for granted: the land of Conall was the kingdom and people ruled by the kindred of Conall (Tír Conaill, 'The Land of Conall,' Cenél Conaill, 'The Kindred of Conall'). Thirdly, the provinces of Ireland were the ancient primary divisions of the island. What was generally accepted, but Ulster was an exception, was that each province should have a single ruling kindred and that any

held by Uí Choílbad: *Bethu Phátraic: The Tripartite Life of Patrick*, ed. Kathleen Mulchrone (Dublin, 1939), ll. 1906–10.

77 *Timna Chathaír Máir* in *Lebor na Cert: The Book of Rights*, ed. and trans. Myles Dillon, Irish Texts Society 46 (Dublin, 1962), pp. 160–62.

78 Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Regnal Succession," *Studia Hibernica* 11 (1971), 7–39.

79 *The Hibernensis*, ed. Flechner, 24.10.

kindred not descended from the ancestral head of the ruling kindred was "an additional kindred":

> Among the Uí Néill and the Connachta and the Ulstermen and the Leinstermen, and the Munstermen each (kindred) that does not trace its genealogy back to these four exalted "pillars" is an additional kindred, namely Níall among the Uí Néill; Eochaid Mugmedón among the Connachta, Cathaír Már among the Leinstermen, Ailill Aulomm among the Munstermen.[80]

Unsurprisingly the author of this passage failed to specify a 'pillar' for the Ulstermen. Alongside these fundamental beliefs were the tools of argument: the notion of an original sin that excluded a man's descendants from the kingship; the prophecies of saints and, earlier, druids; the curses or blessings of a father or of a saint; and the status of mothers. Much of this held good in Wales as in Ireland; but one difference between them was the significance of migration. In Ireland migration implied that one was not descended from the 'pillar' of the province. In Wales no such argument seems to have been used.

Abbreviations

CGH	M.A. O'Brien, *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae* (Dublin, 1962).
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
HE	Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, ed. and trans., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969; repr. 2007).
Laud Gen.	Kuno Meyer, ed., "The Laud Genealogies and Tribal Histories," *Zeitschrift für celtische Philologie* 8 (1912), 291–338.
LL	O.J. Bergin, R.I. Best, M.A. O'Brien and A. O'Sullivan, eds., *The Book of Leinster, Formerly Lebar na Núachongbála*, 6 vols (Dublin, 1954–83).
MGH	*Monumenta Germaniae Historica*

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80 *CGH* p. 137 (140 b 27–29).

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CHAPTER 4

Origin Legends in Italy in the Early Middle Ages

Marios Costambeys

> He was interested in roots and beginnings …
>
> J.R.R. TOLKIEN, *The Lord of the Rings*, chapter 2 ("The Shadow of the Past")

When it came to origin legends, the inhabitants of early medieval Italy enjoyed greater abundance than most of their European contemporaries. Those in the peninsula who looked to the north for their roots—Goths, Lombards—rubbed shoulders with those who looked to the east, whether to the Trojan origin legend of the Romans or to the Holy Land origins of the founders of the peninsula's Christian communities, most obviously Rome itself. Biblical stories were read alongside classical ones, both yielding ingredients that added a legendary depth of flavour to the histories written in Italy between the 6th and the 9th centuries. This chapter is concerned with the origin legends embedded in those histories, and it seeks to expose two tensions that those legends involve. First, origin legends from early medieval Italy navigate between the universal and the particular, a dichotomy that itself takes two forms: between the universal past of humans and the particular history of a people, and between Italy's hospitably expansive space and the narrower activity of a particular identity group within it. A second tension exists between the two elements that origin legends most often emphasize as the foundational attributes of their subjects: arms and laws. Italian origin legends consistently declare their subjects' success in warfare. But that success is always accompanied by, and sometimes tempered by, the promulgation of laws. Many in early medieval Italy read earlier histories of the Romans, often that of Eutropius, himself following Livy, who declared that when Numa Pompilius was made king "he waged no war, indeed, but was no less beneficial to the state than Romulus. For he established both laws and customs among the Romans who, because of their habitual

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warfare, were by now considered robbers and semi-barbarians."[1] The identity groups of early medieval Italy were just as keen to avoid such a reputation.

This chapter will therefore examine origin legends that take 'peoples' as their subjects, but it must immediately be said that these were not the only identity groups whose origins were written about in this period. Ecclesiastical communities also started to inscribe narratives of their origins in the early Middle Ages: most obviously the bishopric of Rome, where the serial biography of the popes, the so-called *Liber Pontificalis*, began to be written in the 530s.[2] In Ravenna, Naples, and Grado, too, interest in the beginnings of those cities as seats of bishops took written form.[3] And by the end of our period monastic communities were also writing about their origins: narratives about the foundations both of Farfa and of San Vincenzo al Volturno were in existence by the end of the 9th century.[4] Ecclesiastical origin tales are not the concern of this chapter, however. It takes as its subject those identity groups who

1 Eutropius, *Breviarium*, c. 3, ed. and trans. H.W. Bird, *The "Breviarium ab urbe condita" of Eutropius*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool, 2011), p. 2; *Eutropii Breviarium ab urbe condita*, c. 3, ed. Carlo Santini (Leipzig, 1979), p. 3: "Postea Numa Pompilius rex creatus est, qui bellum quidem nullum gessit, sed non minus civitati quam Romulus profuit. nam et leges Romanis moresque constituit; qui consuetudine proeliorum iam latrones ac semibarbari putabantur"; in emphasizing the 'arms and laws' paradigm I am following Maya Maskarinec, "Clinging to Empire in Jordanes' *Romana*," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 2, *Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, ed. Helmut Reimitz and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 72–93, and taking my cue in particular from the association of many origin legends with laws in their extant manuscripts, examined below and considered helpfully by Walter Pohl, "Narratives of Origin and Migration in Early Medieval Europe: Problems of Interpretation," *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018), pp. 192–221, esp. pp. 204–05, with reference to his earlier work on the subject.

2 *Le Liber pontificalis: Texte, introduction et commentaire*, ed. Louis Duchesne, 3 vols (Paris, 1955–57); trans. Raymond Davis, *The Book of Pontiffs (*"*Liber pontificalis*"*)* (Liverpool, 1989); *The Lives of the Eighth-Century Popes (*"*Liber pontificalis*"*)*, 2nd ed. (Liverpool, 2007); *The Lives of the Ninth-Century Popes (*"*Liber pontificalis*"*)* (Liverpool, 1995). See now Rosamond McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy: The "Liber pontificalis"* (Cambridge, 2020).

3 Ravenna: *Agnelli Ravennatis Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, Corpus christianorum continuatio mediaevalis 199 (Turnhout, 2006); trans. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis, *Agnellus of Ravenna: The Book of Pontiffs of the Church of Ravenna.* (Washington, D.C., 2004). Naples: John the Deacon, *Gesta episcoporum Neapolitanorum*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 398–435. Grado: *Chronica patriarchum Gradensium*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 392–97.

4 San Vincenzo al Volturno: Ambrosius Autpertus, *Vita sanctorum Paldonis, Tatonis et Tasonis*, ed. Robert Weber, *Ambrosius Autpertus: Opera*, vol. 3, Corpus christianorum continuatio mediaevalis 27B (Turnhout, 1979), pp. 895–905. Farfa: a late 9th-century *Libellus constructionis Farfensis* was used by Abbot Hugh of Farfa in the 10th century, and by Gregory of Catino in the 11th, in their works on the abbey; it is probably not, however, the version that has survived, in Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Farfense 32, which seems to date from the 11th century; see Marios Costambeys, *Power and Patronage in Early Medieval Italy: Local Society, Italian Politics*

had some claim or aspiration to occupy the whole Italian Peninsula: the Goths, the Lombards, and the Romans. Accordingly I will examine in turn Jordanes's histories of the Romans and the Goths and Paul the Deacon's history of the Romans, before turning to the main narratives of Lombard origins written in this period, in the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (hereafter *OGL*), Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (hereafter *HL*) and the work usually called the *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* (hereafter *HLCG*).

1 Italian Peoples and Ambiguous Italies

A necessary preliminary, however, is to clarify the nature of the geographical space that this chapter covers; for 'Italy' (*Italia*) was in the early Middle Ages both an ambiguous term and a loose concept. Unlike some of the places covered in this volume, post-Roman Italy was not a place where a single people, to whom legends of origin were attached, came to dominate throughout. It may have been harder for stories of origin, and of migration into Italy, to carry the same sense of destiny, and to offer the same level of legitimation of the rule of a territory, than it was for the legends of the Irish, the English, or the Franks. There was just too much competition. The Romans themselves, once Christianized, could choose how far to emphasize traditional stories of Trojan migration over or alongside the intervention of divine providence. Moreover, by the late Roman period numerous non-Roman groups were active in Italy, and although many left little imprint on subsequent long-term memory—Paul the Deacon's reference to Odoacer's Herules is a tellingly fleeting example—the Goths and the Lombards added substantially to the fund of stories of beginning, movement, arrival and persistence.[5] The Goths' written history is even arguably their most durable and significant legacy in Italy.[6]

A decisive watershed in perceptions of origins in Italy was the Frankish conquest of the north and centre of the peninsula in 773–74. The perspective of Andreas of Bergamo, looking back on the conquest from a vantage point in the fifth generation of Carolingian rule in Italy, shows the persistent appreciation of its significance. Although he had begun his "historiola" (as he called it) by neatly summarizing Paul the Deacon's *History of the Lombards*, including the latter's well-known tale of their origin and migration, and had managed

and the Abbey of Farfa, c.700–900 (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 13–14 and Umberto Longo, "Agiografia e identità monastica a Farfa tra XI e XII secolo," *Cristianesimo nella storia* 21 (2000), 311–41.

5 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum*, Bk. 2, c. 3 [hereafter *HL* with book and chapter nos.], ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), p. 73.

6 Marios Costambeys, "The Legacy of Theoderic," *Journal of Roman Studies* 106 (2016), 249–63.

to continue focusing on the Lombard kings for the decades after Paul's work cut off in 744 (with the death of Liutprand), Andreas signalled a shift in the entire setting of his work with a papal intervention in 773: "Now the pope, after the Frankish people had shown themselves astute and noble, gave them the advice that they should come against the Lombards and take possession of Italy."[7] The Lombard kingdom had become 'Italy,' and remained such for the rest of Andreas's narrative.[8] In this he was taking his cue from an attitude already current at the time of the conquest: the otherwise unknown Anglo-Saxon Cathwulf congratulated Charlemagne about his capture of "the kingdoms of the Italies" just a year after the event.[9]

The plural is interesting, and will be explored below, but at least one other writer around this time—the author of the *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* discussed below—could write of Charlemagne as holding the *regnum Italiae*, and the notion of the Italian Peninsula as a unity—even if the whole comprised different parts—was by no means new in the late 8th century: it had been a practical proposition at least since Romans and Italians had become indistinguishable in 88 B.C.E., and Paul the Deacon's famous story of Authari declaring the limit of his realm at a column in the sea off Reggio Calabria was surely meant to indicate that it remained more than merely an aspiration.[10] The tension between the notion of Italy's geopolitical unity and the ideas of ethnic distinction among its peoples formed a rather unstable foundation for the writing of origin legends there in the early Middle Ages and helps to

7 Andreas of Bergamo, *Historia*, c. 4, ed. by Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), p. 224. My translation differs only slightly from that of Luigi Aandrea Berto, *Franks and Lombards in Italian Carolingian Texts* (Routledge, 2021), p. 29.

8 See e.g. Andreas, *Historia*, c. 12, ed. Bethmann and Waitz, p. 227, in which Louis II besieged Bari "cum Franci et Langobardi et ceteris nacionum suorum fidelium" (with Franks and Lombards and the rest of his faithful peoples) [NB the grammatical confusion is typical of Andreas's Latin].

9 The eighth of Cathwulf's proofs showing that Charlemagne had been blessed by God above his ancestors is "that you have entered golden and imperial Rome, and have smoothly received from the king of kingdoms the kingdoms of the Italies with all their riches" (quod auream et imperialem Roman intrasti, et Italiorum regna com [sic] omnibus praeciosis a rege regnorum suaviter accepisti): *Epistolae variorum Carolo Magno regnante scriptae*, no. 7, ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 501–04.

10 *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878) [hereafter *HLCG*], pp. 7–11 at pp.10–11, trans. Berto, *Franks and Lombards in Italian Carolingian Texts*, p. 46. For the equation of Romans and Italians, see Arthur Keaveney, *Rome and the Unification of Italy* (London, 1987); for Authari, *HL* 3.32.

account for their differences in emphasis when recounting how communities came to be formed, or implying how they could cohere.[11]

Charlemagne's conquering army in 773–74 comprised various ethnic groups, and more arrived in subsequent decades as he sought to consolidate his rule. Ethnically, the new arrivals were (at a minimum) Franks, Alemans, Bavarians, and Burgundians, none of them in very large numbers.[12] Leaving aside traces in their law codes of the Burgundians' appreciation of their origins, the only one of these groups for whom significant literary traces of their origin legends survive is the Franks.[13] For them, during the slow creation of Carolingian hegemony over the previous three generations, new versions of these stories had arisen, embedded in the developing historical tradition best represented by the work we know now as the *Historia vel gesta Francorum*, which transmitted in new ways the historiographical legacy of late antique and Merovingian Gaul.[14] The latter is in turn represented by the early 8th-century *Liber historiae Francorum* and the 7th-century chronicle attributed to Fredegar, which themselves drew on a long-standing tradition of Latin Christian chronicle writing going back most significantly to Jerome's Latin version of the first major Christian chronicle in Greek by Eusebius, which already in the early 4th century had incorporated biblical and classical history and Greek myth.[15] In Gaul, Jerome's

11 For legends as narratives of belonging see Walter Pohl, "Historiography and Identity: Methodological Perspectives," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 1, *Ancient and Christian Narratives of Community*, ed. Walter Pohl and Veronika Wieser (Turnhout, 2019), pp. 7–50.

12 The classic treatment is Eduard Hlawitschka, *Franken, Alemannen, Bayern und Burgunder in Oberitalien, 774–962: Zum Verständnis der fränkischen Königsherrschaft in Italien* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau, 1960).

13 See Reimitz in this volume, including for hints at Burgundian traditions, also *Liber constitutionum*, c. 3, ed. Ludwig R. De Salis, MGH LL nat. Germ. 2.1 (Hannover, 1892), p. 43 and Ian N. Wood, "*Gentes*, Kings and Kingdoms – The Emergence of States: The Kingdom of the Gibichungs," in *"Regna" and "Gentes": The Relationship between Late Antique and Early Medieval Peoples and Kingdoms in the Transformation of the Roman World*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz, Jörg Jarnut, and Walter Pohl (Leiden, 2003), pp. 243–69. For the Alemans and the Bavarians, and despite the substantial presence of the former in Roman historiography, it is hard to penetrate through the layer of tradition stemming from their incorporation into the Merovingian realm: see Magali Coumert, *Origines des peoples: Les recits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550–85)* (Paris, 2007), pp. 168–69, Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 227 and 328–29. For the utter obscurity of Bavarian origins, cf. Jonathan Couser, "The Changing Fortunes of Early Medieval Bavaria to 907 AD," *History Compass* 8, no. 4 (2010), 330–44 and Carl I. Hammer, "Early Merovingian Bavaria: A Late Antique Italian Perspective," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 4, no. 2 (2011), 217–44.

14 Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*, pp. 309–18.

15 Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*, pp. 282–91 for the situation as it stood by the end of the Merovingian period.

chronicle was the foundation of a ramified effort at chronicle writing that was extended by, among others, Prosper of Aquitaine (ultimately down to 455), an anonymous chronicler down to 452, and Marius of Avenches (down to 581). Gregory of Tours's *Ten Books of Histories* can be seen as a successful effort at integrating this chronicle strand with a wider tradition of historical writing, beginning with the same broad scope as his chronicle and historical sources before focusing on Frankish Gaul.[16] The process of adaptation was therefore continuous, so that entry into Italy and the subsequent process of integration among the elites engendered new versions of origin stories, which embodied anew the tension between received tradition and contemporary resonance that we see in many of the chapters of this volume.[17]

As always, new arrivals served not only to augment the fund of knowledge and to multiply identity markers, but also to complicate and ambiguate existing norms, stories, and allegiances. Paolo Delogu has recently exposed the sheer number of meanings and uses that the term 'Italia' could carry by the Carolingian period (and the similar ambiguity of 'Langobardia,' 'Romania,' and even 'Tuscia').[18] Yet his abundance of different examples of 'Italia' as a territorial unit contrasts markedly with the exiguous number of references to its people as Italians. A legal text relating to Louis II's 866 expedition against Muslim forces in southern Italy refers to an *exercitus Italicus*, which can be read either as an 'Italic' or 'Italian army' or as an 'army of Italians.'[19] A more unequivocal reference, and more telling for our purpose, appears in the seventeenth book added as a continuation to Paul the Deacon's 16-book *Historia Romana* in late 9th- or early 10th-century northern Italy. That book's opening lines place Italians in contrast to 'Greeks' even while attempting to follow on directly from Paul's final lines in which Narses led Italy back (*reduxit*) into the *ius*

16 Reimitz in this volume. For the chronicle tradition see fundamentally Richard Burgess and Michael Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time: The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD*, vol. 1, *A Historical Introduction to the Chronicle Genre from its Origins to the High Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013), and for a useful summary of the tradition (critiquing the notion of its universality) Ian N. Wood, "Universal Chronicles in the Early Medieval West," *Medieval Worlds* 1 (2015), 47–60.

17 Walter Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources for Carolingian Rule," in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 15–33, at pp. 16–17.

18 Paolo Delogu, "The Name of the Kingdom," in *After Charlemagne: Carolingian Italy and its Rulers*, ed. Clemens Gantner and Walter Pohl (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 36–53.

19 *Constitutio de expeditione Beneventana*, ed. Alfred Boretius and Victor Krause, MGH Capit. 2 (Hannover, 1897), no. 218, pp. 94–96 at p. 96, reproducing *Chronica Sancti Benedicti Casinensis*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), p. 471. Even here, the *exercitus Italicus* seems to be distinct from the "Tuscani … cum populo, qui de ultra veniunt."

of the Roman state (*respublica*). By the time that the seventeenth book was put together, a solid distinction had formed between Italians and those they regarded as 'Greeks' that had earlier seemed much hazier, where it existed at all.[20]

Most such references in texts from the Carolingian period involve an ambiguity between the territory of Italy and its population, since they generally employ a Latin plural that incurs confusion between 'Italians' and multiple 'Italies.' Perhaps the most telling example for our purpose here is the reference in the *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* (hereafter *HLCG*) to the *civitates Italiorum*, in an episode to which we will return below.[21] But other writers of the Carolingian era are similarly ambiguous. We have already seen that the Anglo-Saxon Cathwulf referred to *Italiorum regna* in his letter to Charlemagne,[22] and in the early 840s Agnellus of Ravenna praised Lothar "Itala regna tenens

20 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Romana*, 17.1, ed. Amedeo Crivellucci (Rome, 1914), p. 239: "Quum iam, ut premissum est, Romanorum desineret apud Italos imperium plurimeque gentes irruerent contra ipsos ad iusque pertransierat Pelasgum, hac tempestate Iustinianus Augustus Romanum eundem felici sorte regebat imperium" (Since, as has been described, the empire of the Romans was now ending among the Itali and many peoples were raging against them, and it [the empire] had passed over to the *ius* of the Greeks, at this time by good fortune Justinian Augustus was ruling this same Roman empire). Note that I have left *ius* untranslated since it is notoriously hard to decide between its more abstract and more legalistic definitions, such as 'jurisdiction,' 'law,' or 'rule,' and to choose one would require a very speculative essay about what our author might have thought about the nature of Byzantine power and/or authority in Italy. For comment, see Walter Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom: From Secundus to Paul the Deacon," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 2, *Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, ed. Helmut Reimitz and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 319–49 at 334. Note that the seventeenth book is printed only in Crivellucci's edition of the *HR*, preserved earliest in Virginia, Private Collection (formerly Oslo, Schoyen. MS 50); see further Maya Maskarinec, "Who Were the Romans? Shifting Scripts of Romanness in Early Medieval Italy," in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christian and Barbarian Identities in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 297–363 at 336–40, to which these comments are indebted, with details of the manuscript at n. 130.

21 *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 7–11 at p. 9; trans. Berto, *Franks and Lombards in Italian Carolingian Texts*, p. 15. The passage refers to the time of the Lombard invasion when, according to the text, the citizens of Pavia and Milan with the other *civitates Italiorum*, seeing themselves abandoned by Narses, and as had been predestined by God, bowed their necks to Alboin.

22 Above, p. 78. On the (at least) two Italies, see Federico Marazzi, "The Destiny of the Late Antique Italies: Politico-economic Developments of the Sixth Century," in *The Sixth Century: Production, Distribution and Demand*, ed. Richard Hodges and William Bowden (Leiden, 1998), pp. 119–60; building on Andria Giardina, "Le due Italie nella forma tarda dell'imperio," in *Società italiana e impero tardoantico*, vol. 1, ed. Andrea Giardina (Rome, 1986), pp. 1–36; see also A. Giardina, *L'Italia romana: Storie di una identità incompiuta* (Rome, 1997), esp. pp. 3–10.

Romaque potitus,"[23] and Prudentius of Troyes wrote of Louis II as *Italorum rex* in an annal for 859.[24] In the period between Cathwulf and Agnellus, Paul the Deacon wrote of *Itala regna* in his epitaph for Charlemagne's daughter Adelheid.[25] In doing so, as a keen scholar of Latin literature, he was doubtless conscious of his debt to Virgil, if not to Ovid (having directly cited the *Aeneid* elsewhere).[26] The Italies' identity problem was of long-standing. But Paul is better known for his treatment of Italy as a single geographical entity, describing it in detail in eight chapters of his *Historia Langobardorum*, even though he was evidently uncertain about the etymology of the word Italia, and passed over in a sentence the notion that it derived from Italus, king of the Siculi, who had invaded it "in ancient times" (*antiquitus*).[27] In his *Historia Romana* too, we find *Italiae populi* (*HR* 15.16) and *Italiae populos* (*HR* 16.8): one place, numerous peoples. For Paul, Italy possessed a unity in diversity that to some extent resembles his conception of a similarly accommodating Roman empire, as revealed in Maya Maskarinec's meticulous study.[28]

2 Origin Legends of the Romans and the Goths

The origin legends written in early medieval Italy that have received the most attention from historians are those that have been held to relate to the origins

23 *Agnelli Ravennatis Liber pontificalis ecclesiae Ravennatis*, Corpus christianorum montinuatio mediaevalis 199 (Turnhout, 2006), p. 139: "et sceptra imperii augustus tenet almus, | Armipotens, satus Magno Karolo, Lodovicus, | Pacificus, natusque suus Lotharius acer, | Belliger, Itala regna tenens Romaque potitus, | Regibus et populis lectus solio imperiali."

24 *Annales Bertiniani*, *s.a.* 859, ed. Félix Grat, Jeanne Vielliard, and Suzanne Clémencet, *Les Annales de Saint Bertin* (Paris, 1964), p. 82.

25 *Pauli et Petri Carmina*, no. XXIII, ed. Karl Neff, MGH Poet. 1 (Berlin, 1881), p. 59; trans. D. Kempf, *Paul the Deacon: Liber de episcopis Mettensibus* (Leuven, 2013), pp. 82–83.

26 E.g. *Aeneid* 3.185, see Nicholas Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3: A Commentary* (Oxford, 2006), p. 165; see also Ovid, *Heroides* 7.9.

27 *HL* 2.15–23 for the description of Italy; *HL* 2.24 for Paul's suggested etymologies for 'Italia.'

28 Maskarinec, "Who Were the Romans?," pp. 323–35; see also Benjamin Cornford, "Paul the Deacon's Understanding of Identity, his Attitude to Barbarians and his 'Strategies of Distinction' in the *Historia Romana*," in *Texts and Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini et al. (Vienna, 2006), pp. 47–60 at p. 56, who shows that the only pairing of *gens* with *Romana* in the *HR* is lifted from Bede, in an aside where Paul discusses the state of Britain in which Aurelius Ambrosianus, "qui solus fort(a)e Romanae gentis … superfuerat," defeated the Saxons: *Historia Romana* 15.19, ed. Hans Droysen, MGH SRG 49 (Berlin, 1879) [hereafter *HR*], p. 126; compare Bede, *Chronica maiora*, *s.a.* 4444, trans. Faith Wallis, *Bede: The Reckoning of Time* (Liverpool, 1999), p. 223; see further Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, 1.16, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *Bede: Ecclesiastical History of the English People* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 52–55 and Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain*, cc. 25–26, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (London, 1978), p. 28.

of the two main groups who entered the peninsula as the rule of the Roman state there weakened: the Goths and the Lombards. But the most prominent writers of the histories of those peoples—respectively Jordanes and Paul the Deacon—both dealt in other works with the history of the Romans themselves and built their own accounts of the latter's origins on a bedrock of received Roman culture. It is with these that we should start.

An important point to note initially is that both Jordanes and Paul the Deacon embedded tales that we call origin legends into works that were composed self-consciously as histories, and in the richly complex tradition of Latin historical writing. Jordanes stands squarely in this tradition, writing as he was in Constantinople in 551, towards the end of what Paul the Deacon in the late 8th century regarded, with some justification, as a golden age of Latin letters.[29] Jordanes's two works feed off each other while retelling the past expressly from 'Roman' and 'Gothic' viewpoints. In fact, his composition of the former, the *Romana*, seems to have been interrupted while he produced the latter, the *Getica*, and both were written in a relatively limited period over the course of 551.[30] Although Jordanes used the term *origo* in describing the *Getica*, and it appears in the titles that most manuscripts attach to the *Romana*, for him it was not just a term to describe a discrete genre of 'origin story': it could also be a word for his own roots: an *origo* not *of* a *gens*, but *within* it.[31]

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29 *HL* 1.25. Jordanes's closing words in the *Romana* assume the availability (at least to readers in Constantinople) of a wider literature on recent and current events: "This [how Rome lost territory because of incompetent rulers] we too have touched upon briefly in measure to our intelligence, since the interested reader can learn more by reading about these things more widely" (Peter Van Nuffelen and Lieve Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes: Romana and Getica* (Liverpool, 2020), p. 219; "Quod et nos pro captu ingenii breviter tetigimus, quatenus diligens lector latius ista legendo cognoscat."; Jordanes, *Romana* [hereafter *Romana* with chapter no.], c. 6, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 5.1 (Berlin, 1882), p. 52). I am immensely grateful to Professors Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof for advanced sight of their work prior to its publication.

30 The argument for this dating is made fully and convincingly by Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 9–13.

31 Cf. *Get.* praef.—"de origine actusque Getarum"—and *Get.* 40 (315)—"Haec hucusque Getarum origo ac Amalorum nobilitas et virorum fortium facta."—with *Get.* 40 (316) "nec me quis in favorem gentis praedictae, quasi ex ipsa trahenti originem, aliqua addidisse credat." As Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof point out, the term occurred in titles of earlier works of chronography, covering the whole of human history: Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 20 with n. 97 (Anonymous, *Liber genealogus* (*Origo humanis generis*), ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 11 (Berlin, 1894), pp. 154–96; Anonymous, *Origins of the human Race* (*Origo humani generis*), ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 9 (Berlin, 1892), pp. 166–96).

Jordanes's introduction to the *Romana* reveals his intention to tell much more than a simple origin tale.[32] Addressing his otherwise unknown dedicatee, he wrote:

> You [Vigilius] wish to know the miseries of the present world and to be instructed about when it began and what it has suffered up to our own time. You add to this, moreover, that I … briefly narrate to you how the Roman state began, endured, subdued almost the entire world and holds it to this day.[33]

The history of the world, that is, was to come before that of Rome, before the two were to be shown to have merged. Jordanes's miserabilist tone here is reminiscent of his near-contemporary Gregory of Tours, but though Gregory's *Ten Books of Histories* begins similarly by summarizing established sacred history, from his account of Jesus onwards what Gregory offers is an ecclesiastical history, albeit an idiosyncratic version of his own, suited to his particular context and purposes.[34] What Jordanes achieved with the *Romana*, on the other hand, was to blend a summary of sacred history, arranged uniquely, with a conventional, and very secular, account of Roman history culled from familiar authors, splicing the two together so that episodes in the Roman story were connected with sacred chronology.[35]

After the prefatory address to Vigilius, Jordanes begins his preface to the *Romana* proper with the statement that "the Romans … made the world theirs using arms and laws"; as we have seen, echoing Eutropius and ultimately Livy with this key paradigm for the establishment of a people.[36] The first part of the work is however a world history, structured by listing patriarchs and then kings and ending with the coming of Christ. Roman history intrudes into this first

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32 *Romana* praef. 1: "De summa temporum vel origine actibusque gentis Romanorum."

33 *Romana*, c. 2, trans. Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 107. See also Maya Maskarinec, "Clinging to Empire in Jordanes' *Romana*," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 2, *Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities*, ed. Reimitz and Heydemann (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 72–93.

34 Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*, pp. 44–46.

35 Here and in the following paragraph I summarize, too briefly to do their argument full justice, Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 19–30. A similar interpretation is presented by Maskarinec, "Clinging to Empire," esp. p. 81.

36 "Romani … armis et legibus exercentes orbem terrae suum fecerunt: armis si quidem construxerunt, legibus autem conservaverunt." *Romana* 6. See above and Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19.1, ed. and trans. Benjamin O. Foster (London, 1919), pp. 66–67, and Maskarinec, "Clinging to Empire," pp. 75–77, with n. 15 for further references to arms and law as the foundation of the state.

part only rarely: the destruction of Troy and Aeneas's arrival in Italy appear at *Romana* 38–39, contemporary with the terms of the biblical judges Ibzan and Abdon (Judges 12:8–10, 13–15). The account of Roman history proper begins in Cleopatra's time (*Romana* 84), with the accession of Augustus and a dating of the birth of Christ *ab urbe condita* (*Romana* 85), before then jumping back to the point of Rome's foundation and the story of Romulus. Having recounted the stories of Rome's kings and the Romans' many victories in the Republican period, Jordanes then returned to Augustus and presented a serial account of the emperors, now rulers of the world, which largely reproduced identifiable pre-existing sources (Jerome's *Chronicle*, Pseudo-Aurelius Victor), but has a value of its own when it reaches Justinian's reign (though even then, Jordanes relied rather more on texts available to him in Constantinople than he did on his own personal knowledge).[37] Both the summary of Roman history and that of the broader "times" (as the preface puts it) include tales of origin, and both gradually converge as the prelude to a relatively detailed account of Justinian's reign (*Romana* 362–88) that Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof have convincingly interpreted as an extended criticism of the position current at the time of writing in 551, as another phase in the exhausting Gothic war was getting under way: "the state in our times offers a sad spectacle" (*Romana* 388).[38]

Justinian and his war against the Goths are even more obviously the landing stage for the narrative arc of the *Getica*.[39] After a preface dedicating the work to a certain Castalius,[40] Jordanes launches into a lengthy geographical description of the known world before focusing on "Scandza," "a workshop of peoples," "a scabbard of nations," whence the Goths began their migration.[41] From there, he traces the movement of the Goths through Scythia, Dacia, Thrace, and Mysia (sic) to the Black Sea, and their encounters with Persians and Greeks, Amazons and Macedonians, and then the Romans. The long history of Gothic-Roman interaction is related in two parts, the first dealing with the Visigoths, down to Alaric II (d. 507), before jumping back to recount the deeds of the Ostrogoths

37 An authoritative statement of Jordanes's sources for both the *Romana* and the *Getica*, with convincing argumentation over details, can be found in Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 65–99, with the structure of the *Romana* summarized in tabular form on pp. 29–30.

38 I again echo the translation of Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 219: "repperietque dignam nostri temporis rem publicam tragydiae" (*Romana* 388, ed. Mommsen, p. 52).

39 Full analysis of the *Getica*'s structure and themes can be found in Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 33–64.

40 On Castalius, Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 6–7.

41 *Getica* 25: "officina gentium," "vagina nationum." For the translation, Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 232.

down to Theoderic. Jordanes concludes the *Getica* with a brief account of the outbreak and course of the Gothic war, ending with the death of the Gothic king Vitigis in 542 and the marriage of his widow Matasuentha to Justinian's cousin Germanus in 549/50. Their son, says Jordanes, "still holds out hope for both families, if the Lord permits." (*Getica* 314).[42]

The final chapters of Jordanes's tale—relating events that are, after all, covered by a number of other near-contemporary texts—have tended to interest scholars rather less than the earlier ones, and in particular the account of the Goths' Scandinavian origins. We can see elsewhere in this volume that Jordanes's account of the ancient departure of the Goths from their mistily imagined homeland might well have been composed in response to contemporary concerns.[43] By indicating that the Goths' possession of laws was an attribute of their civilization, Jordanes was echoing Prokopios, who quoted (or fabricated) a letter of Justinian inciting the Goths to accept Roman 'customs': Prokopios's word for customs, ἤθη (sing. ἦθος), may be read as involving the same blurred line as that between *mores* and *iura* in Latin.[44] The Goths' point of origin, in this interpretation, is less important than their journey, along which they learnt the ways of civilization. They encountered, among many others, the Dacian Dicineus, who "made them live naturally according to their own laws … written down to this day."[45] It is tempting to think of this as a reference to the Edict of Theoderic, even if Jordanes nowhere explicitly mentions that text.[46] The specific choice of 'Scandza' as the Goths' point of origin draws on classical ethnography, in ways that are explored elsewhere in this volume.[47] A primordial origin for the Goths was a necessary first step in their construction by Jordanes, if not by his sources, as a people with a history and therefore a robust

42 Spoiler alert: he didn't.

43 Kasperski in this volume.

44 Prokopios, *Wars* 5.7.23–5, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing, *Procopius: History of the Wars*, vol. 3 (Loeb, 1914), p. 64.

45 *Getica* 69: "propriis legibus vivere fecit, quas usque nunc conscriptas belagines nuncupant." On the meaning of *belagines*, see Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 254 n. 263.

46 This suggestion need not imply acceptance of the other, more essentializing, aspects of the interpretation of Giulio Vismara, *Edictum Theoderici* (Milan, 1967), pp. 64–70. The more recent assessment of Sean D.W. Lafferty, *Law and Society in the Age of Theoderic the Great: A Study of the "Edictum Theoderici"* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 30 assumes that Jordanes had in mind "a continuing Gothic legal tradition" rather than that, consciously or not, he was giving fictitious antiquity to a much more recent set of legal pronouncements, as is just as plausible.

47 Rix in this volume. For an alternative view, see Walter Pohl and Nicolas Beaupré, "Aux origines d'une Europe ethnique. Transformations d'identités entre Antiquité et Moyen Âge," *Annales ESC* 60 (2005), 183–208, esp. p. 200.

identity that could bear the weight of the civilizing process that he envisaged for them.[48] He had already, following earlier models, portrayed the Romans in a similar way.[49] In that case it was more obvious that the roots and beginnings of a people—the point at which it became a 'people'—cannot be separated from their later fate; but the point was valid for the Goths too. For them, moreover, Italy appears as a land of destiny, their journey there under Theoderic described with allusions to Exodus.[50]

We can be confident that both of Jordanes's works were widely available in Charlemagne's realm by the end of the 8th century. The earliest manuscripts of both the *Romana* and the *Getica* are of Carolingian date, and Paul the Deacon exploited both in his own writings.[51] Paul followed the example of Jordanes in penning histories for or of both a 'barbarian' people and the Romans. This parallel seems however to have been fortuitous in the case of at least three of the four works in question, since Jordanes in writing the *Romana* and the *Getica*, and Paul the Deacon in writing the *Historia Romana*, were responding to specific invitations. Jordanes says that he was asked to write about Roman history by a certain Vigilius, and about the history of the Goths by an otherwise entirely obscure Castalius; Paul wrote the *Historia Romana* at the behest of Adelperga, the wife of Duke Arichis of Benevento.[52] Ostensibly, those works were written to satisfy the curiosity of others (though we have to allow the possibility that in each case the invitations to write were issued at the authors' own prompting). The *Historia Langobardorum*, on the other hand, lacks any kind of dedication or preface: an invitation to modern historians to speculate about its motivation, context, and intended audience(s) that they have eagerly seized, with many and diverse results.[53] Clearly, however, the *HL* fits self-consciously into a specifically Lombard historiographical tradition that should be

48 Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 48–51.

49 *Romana* 38: "The united Phrygian and Italian people were called Latins"; drawing on Jerome, *Chronicle*, 60a, 62b. Further discussion in Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 115 n. 65.

50 Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 43.

51 Carolingian-era manuscripts are listed by Matthias Tischler, "Remembering the Ostrogoths in the Carolingian Empire," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 3, *Carolingian Approaches*, ed. Rutger Kramer, Helmut Reimitz and Graeme Ward (Turnhout, 2021), pp. 65–122 at p. 72 n. 25 (*Romana*) and 26 (*Getica*), based on, but updating, Mommsen, MGH AA 5.1, pp. XLIV–LXXIII.

52 On the identities of Vigilius and Castalius, see Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, pp. 6–7, with n. 21 on figures with whom Vigilius may have been identical: Castalius is no more than a name. On Paul the Deacon's dedication of the *HR* to Adelperga, see Cornford, "Paul the Deacon's Understanding of Identity, his Attitude to Barbarians, and his 'Strategies of Distinction' in the *Historia Romana*," pp. 47–60 at p. 50.

53 Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom," esp. pp. 328–29.

treated as a whole. As we shall see, though, a rigid separation between Paul's approaches to 'Roman' and to 'Lombard' history is hard to maintain. Like all skilful writers, Paul managed not to be bound too closely by the constraints of either genre or tradition.

What Adelperga had asked for, according to the dedicatory letter that prefaces the work, was a rounded-out, and more pious, version of Eutropius's *Breviarium*, which ended at 364 and was written just five years later.[54] Paul professedly exceeded his brief, taking his history down to the time of Justinian, while expressing an intention to pursue it even further, "up to our own age" (ad nostrum usque aetatem), that has confused readers' sense of the work's relationship with the *HL*—the only other work of history he wrote, and anything but a 'continuation' of the *HR*—ever since. The origin story for the Romans that Paul presented in the *HR* exhibits two features that are especially relevant here. First, Paul relied very little on Jordanes's *Romana*; in fact, he included more material from the *Getica*: if the *Romana* was available to him, after all, it was available to others; his aim was therefore not just to duplicate Jordanes's Roman history. Second, and most significantly, he made a considerable addition at its start to his base text, Eutropius's *Breviarium*. The latter belonged to what was by the 4th century an already venerable tradition of Roman history reaching back at least to Livy, and Eutropius took the *Epitome* of Livy as his own foundational text. But Paul may have been aware that universal history, including human origins, was told in chronicles, while Roman history was summarized in breviaries, so he drew from Eutropius what the latter had drawn from the *Epitome* about the foundation of Rome by Romulus, but added to it liberally, especially from Jerome's Christian Latin chronicle, a source also relied on extensively by Jordanes in the *Romana*, though Paul seems to have used it independently.[55] For Walter Pohl, "Eutropius described the civic foundations of empire, Paul the mythical origins of Italian kingship and of the Roman people."[56] For unlike these distinguished authors of the 4th and 6th centuries, Paul took the story further back, as the opening line of the work signals: "First in Italy, as certain people say, reigned Janus" (Primus in Italia, ut quibusdam placet, regnavit Ianus). That is, he began his history with what is essentially an extended gloss on the brief entry in Jerome's *Chronicle* on Rome's pre-Romulan origins—"Ante Aeneam, Janus, Saturnus, Picus, Faunus,

54 Eutropius, *Breviarium*, ed. and trans. H.W. Bird; for the dates see pp. 13 and 163–64.

55 Jerome, *Chronicon*, ed. Rudolf Helm, *Die Chronik des Hieronymus*, Eusebius Werke 7: die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte 47 (Berlin, 1956). For the difference between chronicles and breviaries, Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 22.

56 Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources," pp. 24–25.

Latinus in Italia regnaverunt annis circiter CL."[57]—written with the help of the 4th-century *Origo gentis Romanae*.[58] But Paul immediately introduced a complicating thread to the story, continuing "then Saturn, Jove's son, fleeing from Greece to the city that is called Saturnia from his name, the ruins of which can be seen to this day in the province of Tuscia, not far from the city."[59] Paul was not a careless Latinist. "Saturnia, in the province of Tuscia," is to him a *civitas*, and its ruins are not far from the *urbs*: a city not named here, nor indeed in the preceding prefatory letter to Adelperga, but of course implied by the title by which the work has usually been known: as Pohl has indicated, Paul's history is one of the people of the city of Rome, in Italy.[60] He ended the work, moreover, with the observation that, with the killing of Totila, Narses "brought the whole of Italy back to the *iura* of the *respublica*."[61] This seems to recognize, and to attempt to resolve, the dichotomies we noted at the outset. Roman identity was embodied in a state through its *iura*: its laws or norms.[62] That identity, and the origin legends attached to it in the *HR*, was that of a people from one city—or even *the* city—who came to dominate a whole geographical unit. These were origin stories not just of a people, but of a people within a space: a different kind of primordialism altogether from that in Jordanes's works, and, as it turned out, in the *HL* too.

Paul's emphasis on the primordial origins of the Romans in Italy meant that their development happened *in situ*: providence unfolded across time but not space. This is one indication that, while both Jordanes's and Paul's first attempts at writing *Historia* have come to be known by the same term—*Romana*—they are in fact quite different. Jordanes sought to dovetail two traditions that were already long-standing in his day, those of Christian world history and of Roman history, in the service of a critique of the current condition both of himself and of the Roman empire. Paul, by contrast, wrote firmly

57 Jerome, *Chronicon*, ed. Helm, pp. 100–01.

58 *HR* 1.1. Jean-Claude Richard, *Pseudo-Aurelius Victor: Les origines du peuple romain* (Paris 1983), pp. 7–71, and see C.J. Smith, "The *Origo gentis Romanae*: Facts and Fictions," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 48 (2005), 97–136 and Lars Boje Mortensen "The Diffusion of Roman Histories in the Middle Ages. A List of Orosius, Eutropius, Paulus Diaconus, and Landolfus Sagax Manuscripts," *Filologia Mediolatina* 6–7 (1999–2000), pp. 101–200. Walter Pohl has noted this as one of the three main changes that Paul made to Eutropius's *Breviarium*: Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources," pp. 24–25.

59 *HR* 1.1: "deinde Saturnus Iovem filium e Graecia fugiens in civitate, quae ex eius nomine Saturnia dicta est, cuius ruinae hactenus cernuntur in finibus Tusciae haud procul ab urbe."

60 Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources," pp. 24–26.

61 *HR* 16.23: "universamque Italiam ad rei publicae iura reduxit."

62 See above, n. 20 for problems of definition here.

in the tradition just of Roman history, but at two centuries' remove from what had been (whatever Jordanes's misgivings) the relatively heady days of Justinian's conquests, and at a time when the Roman story could no longer be made to match up with the history of the world. Nor did he bring his history down to his own present, ending precisely, and very deliberately, with the triumph of Justinian's plan for Italy: the last time that the whole Italian Peninsula had been subject to the same ruler as the city of Rome itself. Paul benefitted from the fact that Roman identity was flexible: "It was precisely this tension between a strict definition of what it meant to be a Roman and a considerable flexibility as to who could become a Roman, that made the Roman model so successful"; even when, we might add, the Roman polity itself was a shrunken remnant of its former size.[63] In this regard it is striking that in the Carolingian period the *HR* does not seem to have circulated north of the Alps.[64] It might have seemed too site-specific for a Frankish audience. In documenting Roman imperial power in Italy, the *HR* may have had greater relevance at its time of writing in the 760s or early 770s, when Italian politics still involved a strong element of vestigial Roman imperial power, albeit operated remotely from Constantinople, than after the game-changing Carolingian conquest of 773–74. Paul's emphases also suggest that he had an eye on potential audiences in the city of Rome itself; there is a strong probability that he himself visited there at some point in this period.[65]

3 Origin Legends of the Lombards

Audiences across the Carolingian realm evidently had greater appetite for origin stories that involved migration, and for Italy that meant the Lombards. Three extensive accounts of Lombard origins survive from the Lombard and Carolingian periods: the text known as the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* ("Origin of the Lombard People"), Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* ("History of the Lombards"), and the work usually called the *Historia Langobardorum codicis*

63 Walter Pohl, "Invasions and Ethnic Identity," in Cristina La Rocca, *Italy in the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 11–33 at 11–12.

64 Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources," pp. 23–24 with n. 59.

65 Marios Costambeys, "Paul the Deacon and Rome," in *Writing the Early Medieval West: Studies in Honour of Rosamond McKitterick*, ed. Elina Screen and Charles West (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 49–63. The fact that no *HR* manuscript has a Roman provenance is not significant, since almost no manuscript of any sort can be given a Roman provenance before the late 8th century, at the earliest: McKitterick, *Rome and the Invention of the Papacy*, pp. 174–78.

Gothani ("History of the Lombards of the Gotha Codex").[66] The two historians of the Lombards who wrote later in the 9th century both relied entirely on Paul the Deacon for their brief accounts of the Lombards' distant origins: Andreas of Bergamo summarized the *HL* in his first three paragraphs, while Erchempert opened his history of the Lombards of Benevento with a single sentence on origins, referring his readership directly to Paul the Deacon.[67]

The *OGL* locates the predecessors of the Lombards in a land called "Scadanan" "in northern parts" (in partibus aquilonis); they were then a little people ("gens parva") called the Winnili. They were led by a woman named Gambara and her two sons. Facing battle against the Vandals, they sought aid from the goddess Frea, whose husband Godan [sic] had promised to give victory to the first people that he saw at sunrise. Frea advised the Winnili to come forward at sunrise with their women, who should arrange their long hair around their faces as if beards. At the rising of the sun, Frea turned Godan's bed towards the Winnili and woke him. "Who are those longbeards (*longibarbae*)?", asked Godan. "Just as you have given them a name," replied Frea, "so also give them victory." He did, of course.[68]

The story then recounts the Lombards' migration to 'Golaida,' then to 'Anthaib,' 'Bainaib,' and 'Burgundaib,' and their choice as their king of Agilmund son of Agio. The names of successive kings structure the narrative thereafter. The first historical event mentioned is Odoacer's expedition against the Rugi, dateable to 487, after which the Lombards occupied Rugiland. They then lived for three years in the fields of 'Feld' and had violent encounters with the Herules, the Gepids, and the Sueves. The text details a number of marriage alliances between Lombard kings and other 'barbarian' royalty. King Wacho is said to have been succeeded by Waltari, then by Audoin, who took the Lombards to Pannonia and was succeeded by his son Alboin, who defeated the Gepids (and married the Gepid princess Rosamund), and then entered Italy at Narses's invitation. Rosamund instigated Alboin's murder by his *spatharius* Hilmechis and fled with the latter to Ravenna, where she tried to poison Hilmechis in turn, but he managed to force her also to drink the potion, and they both died. The narrative then recounts Alboin's succession by Cleph, the 12-year period in

66 *Origo gentis Langobardorum* and *Historia Langobardorum codicis*, both ed. Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 1–6, 7–11. For Paul the Deacon's *HL*, see above, n. 5. For the whole Lombard historiographical tradition, see Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom," pp. 335–36.

67 *Andreae Bergomatis historia*, ed. Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 222–23; *Erchemperti historia Langobardorum Beneventanorum*, ibid., p. 234.

68 *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. Waitz, MGH SRL (Hannover, 1878), pp. 1–6, at pp. 2–3. My translation.

which the Lombards were ruled by dukes, and the kings that followed, noting Theudelinda's marriages to Authari and then the king it calls 'Acquo' or 'Aggo' (*recte* Agilulf). The succeeding kings are mere names except for Rothari, whose conquests from the Byzantines are mentioned, and Grimoald, in association with whom is recounted the expedition to Italy of the Byzantine emperor Constantine IV. In two of its three manuscripts the text ends with Perctarit (r. 661–62; 671–83).

Although the *OGL* extends the Lombards' 'origin legends' well into the time of their settlement in Italy, Paul the Deacon seems to have considered as distinct those stories that concerned their existence before their entry into Italy; this, at least, is the implication of his insertion into his own history of a geographical description of the Italian Peninsula and its islands immediately after his account of Alboin's invasion (*HL* 2.15–23). In the chapters of his *Historia Langobardorum* up to that point, Paul expanded greatly on the account in the *OGL*, elaborating some passages while also liberally inserting new material.[69] He retold the story of Gambara and her sons with stress on the sons' youth, while portraying Gambara just as their mother, and not also a prophetess.[70] The Winnili are said to have constituted only a third of the population of 'Scadinavia,' and moved first from there to 'Scoringa.'[71] The tale of their naming 'Longibarbi' by Godan or 'Wotan' he brands a *ridicula fabula*, though the god was "he who is called Mercurius among the Romans."[72] Later he declares that "these things are worthy only of laughter,"[73] and goes on to explain the etymology of *Longobardus* in the Lombard language.[74] The Lombards are also said to have sojourned in 'Mauringa' and encountered the Assipiti.[75] Paul elaborated on the Lombards' wars against the Herules and, especially, the Gepids, the context for a much fuller retelling of legends about Alboin.[76] For these additions he drew on a number of earlier writers, including Jordanes and Isidore of Seville. An even greater variety of sources lies behind his more digressive

69 See the tabular analysis by Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 223–25 and the detailed outline by Christopher Heath, *The Narrative Worlds of Paul the Deacon: Between Empires and Identities in Lombard Italy* (Amsterdam, 2017), pp. 131–54.

70 *HL* 1.3.

71 *HL* 1.7.

72 *HL* 1.8–9. For full discussion of this identification see Ian N. Wood, "Jonas of Bobbio and the Representation of Germanic Paganism," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 96, no. 2 (2018), 889–906 and James Palmer, "Defining Paganism in the Carolingian World," *Early Medieval Europe* 15, no. 4 (2007), 402–25.

73 HL 1.8: "Haec risui digna sunt et pro nihil habenda."

74 *HL* 1.9. It is no great surprise that in Langobardic 'lang' means long and 'bart' means beard.

75 *HL* 1.11, for discussion Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 231–32.

76 *HL* 1.20 (Herules), 23 and 27 (Gepids).

additions, including a description of the north and its peoples (again drawing on Isidore),[77] and of the 'island' of 'Scadinavia'; the story of the Seven Sleepers transposed to Germany (but surely influenced by Gregory of Tours);[78] a description of the customs of the 'Scritobini,' which seems to draw on a number of sources;[79] and references to the lives of the holy men Severinus and Benedict, showing knowledge of, respectively, Eugippius and Gregory I.[80] These additions may be digressive, but they are never irrelevant. Some imply elements of background knowledge (for instance, about the significance of St Benedict) on the part of Paul's expected readership; all of them add depth and a degree of narrative interlace to the work as a whole.

Very different from both Paul's *HL* and the *OGL* is the *Historia Langobardorum codicis Gothani* (also sometimes known as the *Chronicon Gothanum*: it is given no title or rubric in the manuscript), a brief anonymous account of Lombard history that survives in a miscellany of mostly legal texts in Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek Memb. I 84, a manuscript with a Mainz provenance produced, according to most scholars, in the 10th or early 11th century.[81] The Gotha manuscript's *Historia Langobardorum* was copied immediately before the compilation of the laws of the Lombard kings put together by Lupus of Ferrières. Composition of the original text can be dated between 806, the date of Pippin of Italy's expedition to Corsica, with reference to which it concludes, and 810, when Pippin died: he is still alive and worthy of praise in the text. There remains little consensus among historians concerning the identity of the author, his (or possibly her) location, and the text's relationship with Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*. These debates reflect the principal

77 *HL* 1.1–2; see e.g. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 14.4.4, trans. Stephen A. Barney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 289; also Christopher Heath, "Hispania et Italia: Paul the Deacon, Isidore, and the Lombards," in *Isidore of Seville and his Reception in the Early Middle Ages: Transmitting and Transforming Knowledge*, ed. Jamie Wood and Andrew T. Fear (Amsterdam, 2016), pp. 159–76.

78 *HL* 1.4; see Gregory of Tours, *The Glory of the Martyrs*, c. 94, trans. Raymond Van Dam (Liverpool, 1988), pp. 87–88.

79 *HL* 1.5; see Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, p. 227.

80 *HL* 1.25 and 26; see Eugippius, *The Life of St Severin*, trans. Ludwig Bieler and Ludmilla Krestan (Washington, D.C., 1965), cc. 8 and 40 and Gregory I, *Dialogues*, Bk. 2, trans. Odo John Zimmermann (Washington, D.C., 1959).

81 *Leges Langobardorum*, ed. Friedrich Bluhme, MGH LL 4 (Hannover, 1868), pp. XXXVII–XXXIX; Bluhme commented that the codex had already at that point "very often been discussed by learned men." A description of the contents with reference to recent literature can be found on the *Bibliotheca Legum* website: http://www.leges.uni-koeln.de/en/mss/codices/gotha-flb-memb-i-84/ (accessed 7 August 2021). For recent authoritative analysis of the capitularies in this manuscript, see Britta Mischke's blog: https://capitularia.uni-koeln.de/en/blog/handschrift-des-monats-dezember-2018/ (accessed 7 August 2021).

concern of recent commentators to read this text chiefly as a marker of identity in the context of the Frankish conquest of the Lombard kingdom and the subsequent migration into it of members of the Frankish elite.

The text certainly contrasts with those of Paul the Deacon and the *OGL* in significant respects. It begins by invoking as a source "the ancient forefathers of the Lombards" and involving also either in their migration or in the tale of their migration Gambara, who appears rather differently here from her roles in the *OGL* and the *HL*. The Lombards' ancestors were "a rough and bloody progeny, without law" who counted snakes among their own progenitors.[82] Their migration into Italy is described as if an exodus, divinely ordained to bring them to the salvation of Christianity, and punctuated with biblical quotations which stress that in receiving Christianity the Lombards acquired written law.[83] The narrative then turns more specifically to the people's origins. They were first called the Winili, because they lived near the river 'Vindilicus,' but changed their name to 'Langobardi' because of their long beards, never shaven. Their migration started on the banks of the Elbe and continued through the land of the Saxons. They established their first king, named Agelmund, who led them against the 'Beovinidis'; in that area "the remains of the house and dwelling of their King Wacho can still be seen today."[84] Eventually they moved to Pannonia, where they lived for 22 years, fighting often against the Avars. From this point the narrative largely follows that of the *OGL* down to the death of Alboin. The *HLCG* adds, however, that on leaving Pannonia the Lombards made a pact of friendship with the Avars, according to which the Avars would stand ready at any point in the next 200 years to hand over the Lombards' portion of Pannonia should they need it, and to help the Lombards in Italy. The *HLCG* also adds that after the Lombards had entered Italy, the citizens of Milan, Pavia and other cities "seeing that they were defenceless … submitted their necks to Alboin, as had been

82 *HLCG*, p. 7: "Asserunt antiqui parentes Langobardorum, per Gambaram parentem suam pro quid exitus aut movicio seu visitatio eorum fuisset, deinter serpentibus parentes eorum breviati exissent, sanguinea et aspera progenies, sine lege." Luigi Andrea Berto, *Franks and Lombards in Italian Carolingian Texts* (Routledge, 2021), p. 3 gives a fluent and perfectly arguable reading of this sentence's highly opaque Latin. I differ from it in small—but potentially significant—respects (as will be clear from what follows, I think it is important to retain the text's syntactical emphasis on the original Lombards' lawlessness). Berto's translation is certainly to be preferred in general to that of William Dudley Foulke in his *Paul the Deacon: History of the Lombards* (Philadelphia, 1907), though the latter (p. 321) was perhaps wise to decline to translate the more obscure phrases here.

83 E.g. the text quotes Romans 5:13: "non inputatur peccatum, cum lex non esset" (NB the standard Vulgate text reads, more grammatically, "peccatum autem non imputabatur, cum lex non esset").

84 Berto, *Franks and Lombards*, p. 7.

predestined by God."[85] Its final addition to the *OGL*'s narrative comes in the middle of its version of the story of Rosamund in which, after telling of Rosamund's inciting Hilmechis to murder Alboin, and their flight to Ravenna, the author interjects

> So there were schisms and wars between the Lombards and the Romans for several years. Then, as the evil inclination to sin had a female origin, the same reason for which women have had the habit of sinning up to the present day…

Rosamund tried also to poison Hilmechis.[86]

The next part of the *HLCG* is no more than a catalogue of the Lombard kings, with the lengths of their reigns in years, with one exception: Rothari is lauded for his legislation, "through whom the aforesaid Lombards conduct their disputes according to the canons and became helpers of the priests."[87] (The other legislating kings—Grimoald, Liutprand, Ratchis, and Aistulf—are rather hard done by.) The final chapter begins "here ended the kingdom of the Lombards and began the kingdom of Italy through the most glorious Charles, king of the Franks." Charlemagne had only the best motives: he sought justice for St Peter; he did not seek to destroy; "and with pity he conceded to the Lombards the laws of their paternal fatherland and added his own, as he wanted, which were necessary for the Lombards."[88] Finally, he received the dignities of Roman power and defended the properties of St Peter from the latter's enemies before handing over the *regnum Italiae* to his son Pippin. The latter matched his father in fortitude and defeated the Avars and the Beneventans (not called 'Lombards' here) as well as the 'Beowinidis' (see above) and recaptured Corsica from the Moors. At the time of writing (806–10), Italy was as bright as "in the most ancient days," enjoying "laws and plenty and peace."[89]

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85 *HLCG*, c. 5, p. 9: "videntes se vacuae, sicut a Deo fuerat praedestinatum, colla sua ipsius Albuin regi subicierunt."

86 *HLCG*, c. 6, p. 10: "Unde plures annos scisma et bella inter Langobardos et Romanos fuerunt. Tunc, ut per femeneum primum exordium accidit mala suasio peccati, inde usque ad presentem diem feminalis tenet consuetudo peccandi" [my translation differs from Berto only in reading *plures* as 'several' instead of 'many'].

87 *HLCG*, c. 7, p. 10 (my translation): "per quem supradicti Langobardi ad cannonicam tenderunt certamina, et sacerdotum facti sunt aduitores" (for this translation of 'ad,' see Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), s.v. 'ad,' def. I.D.2).

88 *HLCG*, c. 9, p. 10 (my translation): "Hic finitum est regnum Langobardorum, et incoavit regnum Italiae per gloriosissimum Carolum regem Francorum."

89 *HLCG*, c. 9, p. 11 (my translation): "Praesentem diem per eius adiutorium splenduit Italia, sicut fecit antiquissimis diebus. Leges et ubertas et quietudinem habuit per domni nostri merita prestante domino nostro Ihesu Christo."

The entanglement of origin legends with law and the idea of legal order is very evident in the last chapters of the *HLCG*, and suggests itself as one of the themes through which we can examine the origin legends in the *OGL*, the *HL*, and the *HLCG* conjointly and comparatively. It is instructive first however to consider their transmission, for it is remarkable that two of our three texts, the *OGL* and the *HLCG*, survive solely in manuscripts that mostly otherwise contain laws. The *OGL* seems to have been attached to copies of the earliest Lombard law code, the Edict of Rothari, at least by Paul the Deacon's lifetime: as Walter Pohl has shown, Paul's statement in the *HL* that readers can find an account of the Lombard King Wacho's subjugation of the Sueves in "the prologue of the edict that king Rothari composed of the Lombard laws" must be a reference to the *OGL*, preceding a copy of the Edict.[90] All three of the extant copies of the *OGL* are indeed in legal manuscripts; but all date from the late 10th or 11th centuries.[91] One of them—Modena, Biblioteca Capitolare O.I.2—couples the *OGL* with a handbook of Lombard laws prepared for Eberhard, the Carolingian-era duke of Friuli, by the Frankish intellectual Lupus of Ferrières in the 830s. This collection also constitutes the main text in the single *HLCG* manuscript, Gotha, Forschungsbibliothek Memb. I 84. As Pohl has stressed, these manuscripts continued to be linked to law and other "texts of identity and memory" in the 11th century.[92] Among the communities whose identities they helped to inform were therefore, in the first instance at least, lawyers: both the new secular legal experts who began to emerge as a profession from the late 9th century onwards (the judges, notaries, and jurists employed in the royal judicial administration), and the ecclesiastics, especially monks, who from the 9th century on were becoming increasingly interested in preserving, and expert in using, legal texts of all kinds, both codified law and texts of legal practice like charters; often in response to the increasing legal expertise of the laity.[93] The preservation of the *OGL* and the *HLCG* lends an interestingly identitarian aspect to the

90 Walter Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 9–28 at p. 15. *HL* 1.21. *OGL*, c. 4, pp. 3–4: "Eo tempore inclinavit Wacho Suavos sub regno Langobardorum."

91 Details are given in Walter Pohl, "History in Fragments: Montecassino's Politics of Memory," *Early Medieval Europe* 10, no. 3 (2001), pp. 358–60 and at greater length in idem, *Werkstätte der Erinnerung: Montecassino und der Gestaltung der langobardischen Vergangenheit*, Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung. Ergänzungsband 39 (Vienna, 2001).

92 Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power," p. 22.

93 Exploration of these developments can be found in Giorgia Vocino and Charles West, "'On the Life and Continence of Judges': The Production and Transmission of Imperial Legislation in Late Ottonian Italy," *Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Moyen Âge* 131, no. 1 (2019), 87–117 and Maya Maskarinec, "Monastic Archives and the Law: Legal Strategies at

development of law in this period; not least the developing interest in what was generally known as the *Liber legis Langobardorum*. The inclusion of origin legends in associated legal compilations suggests that, although the law may no longer have been structured by the history of Lombard kingship, their readers still cared whose laws these were.[94]

That origin legends are continually susceptible to repurposing is already evident when we consider the origins of the *OGL* itself. The text ends with Perctarit, and the strongest case for its date places it in that king's 'second' (most substantial) period of rule, 671–88; a time when affirmations of Lombard identity may have been intended to counteract Roman rootedness, Byzantine alienness, and/or the heterogeneity of the 'Italians' in the Lombard kingdom.[95] Perctarit's earlier experience of exile—he had been briefly king 661–62 before being ousted by Grimoald, to return only in 671—raises the possibility that that had some influence on the text: either that the account of the Lombard people's legendary migrations bore some relation to the real wanderings of the king, or that these stories were influenced by legends of other peoples whom Perctarit had encountered. Paul the Deacon tells us that he spent an initial period of exile among the Avars, and a second sojourn with the Franks, around the time that the *Chronicle of Fredegar*'s version of the Franks' origins was first circulating.[96] It is interesting in that context that the only other instance of the story of naming of the *Langobardi*/*Langobarbi* appears in that chronicle: in battle with the Huns (not the Vandals, as in the *OGL*), the Lombards had their women tie their hair to look like beards to frighten the enemy, whereupon a voice from the sky, which they *fanatice* supposed to be that of their god Wodan, exclaimed: "these are the Longobardi."[97] Walter Pohl has shown that the story likely came to the compilers of *Fredegar's Chronicle* (none of whom is likely to have been called 'Fredegar') ultimately along with the stories he relates about Gundeperga, wife of three Lombard kings: Arioald (626–36), Rothari (636–52), and Rodoald (652–53). The *OGL*, moreover, "contains all the necessary information to trace Perctarit's genealogy back to Theodelinda and the prestigious

Farfa and Monte Amiata at the Turn of the Millennium," *Early Medieval Europe* 29, no. 3 (2021), 331–65.

94 Basic on the development of lay lawyers' self-consciousness is Chris Wickham, "Lawyers' Time: History and Memory in Tenth- and Eleventh-Century Italy," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R.H.C. Davis*, ed. Henry Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (London, 1985), pp. 53–71; reprinted in Chris Wickham, *Land and Power: Studies in Italian and European Social History, 400–1200* (London, 1994), pp. 275–93.

95 Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power," p. 18.

96 *HL* 5.2 and 32–33.

97 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 3.65, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SRM 2 (Hannover, 1888), p. 110.

Lething dynasty"—Theodelinda was Gundeperga's mother and Perctarit's great aunt.[98] Their role echoes that in the text of the Lombard women whose marriages constituted cognatic alliances with other non-Roman peoples.[99] So while the story itself may well have been circulating for generations in Lombard elite circles, perhaps especially among the Lethings, the idea of writing it down in the form we have it may have come from Francia in the 660s. This would suggest that the archaic, folkloric character of the *OGL*'s origin legend might in fact owe as much to artful, literary construction as did the *Fredegar Chronicle*, while still involving the stuff of conversation between members of an elite identity group, their oral tradition.[100]

The Lombard origin story that appears earliest in a surviving manuscript in the *Fredegar Chronicle*, and as a surviving text either in that or in the *OGL*, has been seen as an instance of the oral transmission of legends. The matter is dealt with in far greater detail elsewhere in this volume.[101] It suffices to say here that while much of the *OGL*'s story, such as the idea of northern origin, actually has tangible and in some cases long-established literary precedent, features such as personal names may well derive from oral transmission: Gambara and her sons, for instance, and the Winnili/Winniles. (But not 'Wodan,' who had already made a literary appearance in Jonas of Bobbio's *Life of Columbanus*.[102]) The invisibility of the oral means that we can only write with confidence about origin legends as a form of literature.[103]

Traces of orality might be detected in Paul the Deacon's *HL*, too, but it is much clearer that as a piece of literature it was widely read on both sides of the Alps: in comparative terms, by far the most popular of our three Italian-born

98 Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power"; idem., "Paolo Diacono e la costruzione dell'identità longobarda," in *Paolo Diacono: Uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolinigio*. Convegno internazionale di studi, ed. Paolo Chiesa (Udine, 2000), pp. 413–26.

99 E.g. the marriages of Wacho and those of his daughters: *OGL*, c. 4, pp. 3–4. See Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 213–14. Wolfgang Haubrichs, "Von der Unendlichkeit der Ursprünge: Transformationen des Mythos in der *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, und der *Historia Langobardorum* des Paulus Diaconus," in *Anfang und Ende: Formen narrativer Zeitmodellierung in der Vormoderne*, ed. Udo Friedrich, Andreas Hammer, and Christiane Witthöft (Berlin, 2013), pp. 67–90, suggests that the emphasis on women in the story of how the Lombards got their name may be connected to the dynastic background of the *OGL*.

100 See further Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom," pp. 321–23. Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity*, pp. 166–239 shows just how artful, how conscious of literary precedent, the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle* actually were.

101 Ghosh in this volume.

102 Jonas of Bobbio, *Life of Columbanus and his Disciples*, Bk. I, c. 27, trans. Alexander O'Hara and Ian N. Wood (Liverpool, 2017), p. 159 with n. 350; and see above, n. 72.

103 See also Van Nuffelen and Van Hoof, ed. and trans., *Jordanes*, p. 67.

Lombard origin legends. Laura Pani's research has uncovered at least 115 manuscripts of the whole text or substantial parts of it.[104] The relative paucity, amidst this broad diffusion, of manuscripts of the *HL* of Italian provenance has struck some as suspicious (as showing relative neglect in Italy; or even a target audience of Franks), but it has to be seen in the light of two contextual points: the relative scarcity in general of manuscripts of Italian provenance compared with those of Frankish (with the proviso that provenance is often hard to establish), and the sheer quality of Paul as a storyteller, which ensured that his stories had wide currency and immense durability.[105] Part of his skill was his ability to assimilate previous works.[106] Paul can in general be seen as a curator of texts from the past to ensure their availability to his contemporaries: the earliest manuscript of the letter collection of Ennodius of Pavia, for instance (Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, 9845–9848, which was at Lorsch by 830), seems to bear witness to his efforts at gathering and copying important Christian writers of previous ages whose works were available to him in Italy.[107] Paul's general respect for his sources did not, however, prevent him from intervening in a work in order to shape his own argument, and his use of the *OGL* is an obvious case in point. We have already seen many of the numerous additions that he made to that text: Magali Coumert has provided a full tabulation.[108] As she and others have shown, most of these additions are from identifiable sources, even if some—the story of Lamissio against the Bulgars, or of Rumetruda provoking war with the Herules—are elaborated beyond what can be seen in texts. The

104 Laura Pani, "Aspetti della tradizione manoscritta dell'*Historia Langobardorum*," in *Paolo Diacono: Uno scrittore fra tradizione longobarda e rinnovamento carolinigio*, ed. Chiesa, pp. 367–412.

105 Rosamond McKitterick, "Paul the Deacon and the Franks," *Early Medieval Europe* 8, no. 3 (1999), pp. 319–39; reprinted as "Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* and the Franks," in Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 60–83 makes the case for a Frankish audience. Among the best evidence for the reception of the HL in Italy is the historical compendium compiled in Verona *c.*820, outlined by Rosamond McKitterick, "Carolingian History Books," in McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World*, pp. 28–59 at 50–57; for the reception of the *HL* in Italy, see Walter Pohl, "Paulus Diaconus und die 'Historia Langobardorum': Text und Tradition," in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna, 1994), pp. 375–405 at 388–95 and Paolo Chiesa, "Caratteristiche della trasmissione dell'*Historia langobardorum*," in *Paolo Diacono e il Friuli altomedievale* (*secc. VI–X*) (Spoleto, 2001), pp. 45–66.

106 See Heath, *Narrative Worlds of Paul the Deacon*, pp. 127–30 for a list of the sources employed in the *HL*.

107 Stéphane Gioanni, ed. and trans., *Ennode de Pavie: Lettres*, vol. 1 (Paris, 2006), pp. CXLI–CLVII; more generally see Costambeys, "Paul the Deacon and Rome."

108 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 223–25.

most important, however, is perhaps a change of tone: that is, Paul's distinctly sniffy attitude to the 'core' origin legend about the naming of the 'Longobardi.' Clearly, for Paul this could not be historical fact. But rejecting it did not mean that the Lombards did not still need Christianizing: "Paul carefully faded out the barbarian, pagan, and heretical past of the Lombards in the course of his narrative," while fading up acts of Christian piety.[109]

The author of the *HLCG* had, as we have seen, even less time for tales of the Lombards' pagan past than had Paul. This may reflect the author's personal reluctance even to discuss paganism, though he (or she) can hardly have been writing in a more thoroughly Christianized context than Paul was, given that he completed the HL as a monk at Montecassino.[110] In comparison with the scaling-back of the more pagan elements in Paul's narrative, the other changes introduced by the author are minor and largely drawn from known sources such as Isidore or the *Fredegar Chronicle*.[111] Something in the roughly ten years between Paul setting down his pen (in or shortly before 796, according to the best estimate) and the *HLCG*-author picking up theirs (806×810) may have prompted an even firmer insistence on the sincerity of the Lombards' Christianity.[112] The vituperative anti-Lombard barbs emanating from the papal administration in Rome may have found their mark.[113] In such a context, it may have been necessary to portray the Lombards' migration firmly as a providential Exodus, beginning almost as soon as they were human (since their ancestors were serpents), and leading not only to salvation but to the acquisition of law.

The *HLCG*'s assertion, in its opening sentence, that the ancestors of the Lombards lived *sine lege* introduces a key theme of the text. We have already seen that one of its only original asides in its otherwise derivative catalogue of the Lombard kings concerns Rothari's role as a legislator. The author seems to have in mind the prologue to Rothari's Edict itself, which avers that the Lombards had been led into Italy by divine power, a providential progress on which the natural next step was the affirmation of their law in writing.[114] Since their

109 Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom," p. 341.

110 Walter Pohl, "Paul the Deacon – between *sacci* and *marsuppia*," in *Ego Trouble: Authors and Their Identities in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Richard Corradini, Matthew Gillis, Rosamond McKitterick, and Irene van Renswoude (Vienna, 2010), pp. 111–23 at 117.

111 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 253–58.

112 For the date of composition of the *HL*, see Pohl, "Historical Writing in the Lombard Kingdom," p. 327.

113 Clemens Gantner, *Freunde Roms und Völker der Finsternis: Die päpstliche Konstruktion von Anderen im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert* (Vienna, 2014), esp. pp. 158–64.

114 *Edictus Rothari*, prologue, ed. Friedrich Bluhme, MGH LL 4, p. 1.

progress up to that point had been—as the authors of all three origin texts extensively relate—a story of wars and victories, the Lombards were living out Livy's dictum, echoed as we have seen by Eutropius and then Jordanes, that the foundations of a people were arms and laws.[115] In terms of their actual composition the Lombards had been a very fluid group throughout their history.[116] Those who entered Italy in 568 quickly splintered—many continued to fight for the Byzantines—and absorbed other groups already there. By the time Paul the Deacon was writing the *HL*—or even, 120–30 years earlier, at the time when the *OGL* was being set down on parchment—there were many people who called themselves 'Langobardus/a' or were subjects of a *rex gentis Langobardorum*, but the value of such signs of distinction was not static: the same people now spoke Latin and dressed differently from their forebears, "in the manner of the Romans," as Paul noted (with an air of regret).[117] In this context, an origin legend of migration into Italy did not relate how the Lombards came to be in Italy so much as explain how the Lombards came to be 'the Lombards': i.e. a durable ethnic group. And the most significant act in that formation was the acceptance of a code of law. An individual item in Rothari's Edict concerned those he called *waregang*: a person (a man) who had come into the kingdom from outside and was taken under royal protection. Such a man should live by Lombard law unless explicitly exempted by the king. His heirs should live just as did the children of Lombards; and if he had no legitimate children "it shall not be in their power to give away any of their property or to alienate it by any means without the king's consent."[118] No other law so clearly describes the 'in-group' who constituted the Lombards in the eyes

115 Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.19.1, ed. and trans. Foster (London, 1919): "Qui regno ita potitus urbem novam conditam vi et armis, iure eam legibusque ac moribus de integro condere parat."

116 What we can say with confidence about the actual history of people called 'Lombards' up to their entry into Italy is set out neatly by Patrick Geary, "Longobardi in the Sixth Century without Paulus Diaconus," in *Italy and Early Medieval Europe: Papers for Chris Wickham*, ed. Ross Balzaretti, Julia Barrow and Patricia Skinner (Oxford, 2018), pp. 50–59.

117 *HL* 4.22: "de Romanorum consuetudine." For the titles of the kings (differing between their law codes and their diplomas), see Herwig Wolfram, *Intitulatio*, vol. 1, *Lateinische Königs- und Fürstentitel bis zum Ende des 8. Jahrhunderts* (Graz, 1967), p. 197.

118 *Edictus Rothari*, c. 367, ed. Bluhme, MGH LL 4 (Hannover, 1868), p. 85: "De waregang. Omnes waregang, qui de exteras fines in regni nostril finibus advenerint, seque sub scuto potestatis nostrae subdederint, legibus nostris Langobardorum vivere debeant, nisi si aliam legem ad pietatem nostrum meruerint. Si filius legetimus habuerint, heredes eorum existant, sicut et filii Langobardorum; si filius legetimus non habuerint, non sit illis potestas absque iussionem regis res suas cuicumque thingare, aut per quolibet titulo alienare." (Translation mine.) Manuscript variants include (but are by no means restricted to) *uuaregaga*, *uuaregango*, *uuaregan*, *uuarigang*, *guaregangus*.

of the legislator—and, both by implication and by codicological association, those of the authors of Lombard origin legends. It did not mean that everyone in the kingdom professed Lombard law. But it did mean that anyone coming into the kingdom was subject to the king's power in respect of their law, and therefore of their identity. For if you had to profess Lombard law, then you also had a claim on the legends that accompanied it. The *HLCG* pushed out the boundaries in this respect: merging the Lombard origin legend into a line of Frankish kings meant extending the potential right to that past to incomers.

4 Conclusion

The many conundrums presented by the origin legends written in early medieval Italy are ultimately soluble if we see them all as attempting to bring order to disorder. They involved elements that defined the persistent verities of Italian politics: the unverifiability of written origin legends' claims to roots in oral traditions; the tension between the notion of the 'tradition' of a 'core' of stories, with the implication that they were passed 'down' orally, and the written 'transmission' of literary legends and textual motifs; the paradox that for a people to belong somewhere ('Italia'), they had to come from somewhere else (Scandza, Scatinavia, or the banks of the Elbe); the contradiction between law as the identity-catalyst of a moveable group and law as an establisher of fixed boundaries in space (the *regnum*). All these elements were part of the stuff of political conversation and argument in early medieval Italy, where kings so often came from somewhere else, elites were self-consciously hybrid, and legal order was the subject of continual renegotiation. While they had inherited the idea that the roots of a successful state lay in the joint application of 'arms' and 'laws,' for Italians after the age of conquest, when the writ of law was widely familiar, the resort to 'arms' most often indicated the side-stepping of legal order, or its complete absence, and insistence on the primacy of written law was an antidote to fighting, legislation the act of a peaceable king.[119]

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CHAPTER 5

Origin Stories in the Viking Diaspora—Norway, Iceland, Orkney

Judith Jesch

1 Introduction

The geographical region we know as Norway has been occupied by human beings for the last 10,000–12,000 years, since the gradual retreat of the ice at the end of the last Ice Age. The modern nation-state of Norway, with more or less its current boundaries, can be traced back at least to the Middle Ages. In complete contrast, the volcanic island of Iceland, in the North Atlantic, is geologically very young and was first permanently occupied by humans, many of them from Norway, in the Viking Age, around 1200 years ago. The modern nation-state of Iceland only came into being after the Second World War. Although it had an independent precursor in the period from the 9th to the 13th centuries, in the interim Iceland was subject to Norway and, later, Denmark. The modern county of Orkney is today an administrative region of Scotland but it, too, was subject to Norway and, later, Denmark from some time in the late Viking Age until the middle of the 15th century. As the earldom of Orkney, for much of this time it included the neighbouring archipelago of Shetland and parts of northern mainland Scotland. Human habitation there also goes back to the end of the last Ice Age, but the establishment of the earldom was a result of Viking Age conquest and immigration, mainly from Norway. These three distinct polities, Norway, Iceland, and Orkney, so different today, thus also had very different origins, but were closely linked throughout a period of at least 600 years. Their origins were a matter of interest to the medieval scholars, mainly Icelandic, whose texts are our main historical source for that time. This interest derived from the fact that when they wrote, from the 12th to the 14th centuries, both Iceland and Orkney were subject to the Norwegian crown for at least part of that time, and the populations of all three spoke the same language, Old Norse, and shared many other cultural traits, including an awareness of a common Norwegian heritage. This awareness, and the political, cultural, and familial links between the three, indicate that they were part of a

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diaspora, a network of connections which transcended the initial migrations in both time and space.[1]

Iceland is widely recognized for a literary golden age, beginning in the early 12th century, and lasting around 300 years, which encompassed an extraordinary range of textual creation and transmission, much of which was concerned with the nation's Viking Age origins and its relative newness. This literary endeavour was made possible by the conversion of the population to Christianity in around 999/1000 C.E., over a century after the initial settlement, and the subsequent introduction of manuscript literacy to a culture that was previously oral. It is characteristic of medieval Icelandic literature that much of its content reaches back to before that conversion period, though the nature of the relationship between this highly sophisticated literary culture and its presumably oral predecessors is difficult to determine and a long-standing matter of discussion by scholars.[2] Much of the poetry recorded in manuscripts of the 13th century and later ostensibly had its origins in the Viking Age, potentially even before the settlement of Iceland, and much of it is notable for content rooted in the pre-Christian beliefs of the Scandinavians.[3] But the prose literature also has an extensive backward-looking component. Two works of historiography, *Íslendingabók* ("Book of Icelanders") and *Landnámabók* ("Book of Settlements"), explicitly address the origins and early history of the Icelandic nation and will be discussed further below.[4] With a slightly more fictional bent, the long prose narratives known as the 'Sagas of Icelanders' are generally set in a period which begins before or at the time of the settlement in the 9th century, with a strong genealogical component reaching back to that time (and sometimes before), while generally also taking their stories forward into the 11th century, beyond the conversion. These are followed by the so-called 'Contemporary Sagas' which are Icelandic narratives set mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries. The 'Kings' Sagas' (mainly dealing with kings of Norway) cover a period from the 9th to the 13th centuries, with some texts starting even

1 Judith Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora* (London, 2015), pp. 68–80.

2 Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method* (Cambridge, MA, 2004).

3 Judith Jesch, "Poetry in the Viking Age," in *The Viking World*, ed. Stefan Brink and Neil Price (London, 2008), pp. 291–98.

4 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík, 1968), pp. 3–397; for translations see Siân Grønlie, *Íslendingabók. Kristni Saga. The Book of the Icelanders. The Story of the Conversion* (London, 2006) and Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, *The Book of Settlements. Landnámabók* (Winnipeg, 1972); the latter is a translation of the *Sturlubók* version only (see below).

further back in the mists of uncountable time. The 'Legendary Sagas' are set in a less well-defined world that is largely northern European and predates the settlement of Iceland. Their stories are more fantastical than those of the more realistic (and ostensibly historical) sagas mentioned above, but this genre also reveals the same desire to explore the ancestral past and link it with more recent times through genealogy and geography. While there are other genres of medieval Icelandic literature that do not share these concerns, this substantial corpus of historically minded narratives provides the intellectual context for the origin stories to be discussed below.[5]

These origin stories are a rather mixed bag with regard to their genre, their date, and their content, as well as the extent to which they are legendary or historical. The two Icelandic texts already mentioned, *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók*, were probably both first composed in the 12th century, though the latter survives only in later, expanded, versions which reflect the preoccupations of the 13th and 14th centuries. They both offer relatively sober, ostensibly historical accounts of the discovery and settlement of Iceland, though closer investigation below will reveal radically different narratives. The other two texts to be discussed here, relatively short accounts known respectively as *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* ("How Norway Was Settled") and *Fundinn Noregr* ("Norway Discovered"), are both preserved in the late 14th-century manuscript Flateyjarbók, a compilation of Kings' Sagas and related texts.[6] They both account for the origins of Norway in the remote, legendary past. While they seem to derive from the same traditions, *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* may have been produced for its manuscript context, while *Fundinn Noregr* is preserved in the same manuscript, but as the introductory section of the originally independent *Orkneyinga saga* ("Saga of the Orkney Islanders") which seems to have its origins in the early 13th century.[7] It also links the origins of Norway and Orkney, while *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* does not mention Orkney. The discussion

5 Margaret Clunies Ross, *The Cambridge Introduction to the Old Norse-Icelandic Saga* (Cambridge, 2010).

6 *Flateyjarbók: En samling af norske konge-sagaer med indskudte mindre fortællinger om begivenheder i og udenfor Norge samt annaler*, ed. Gudbrand Vigfusson and C.R. Unger, 3 vols (Christiania [Oslo], 1860–68), 1:21–24, 219–21. *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is translated in part in Sir G.W. Dasent, *The Orkneyingers' Saga with Appendices, &c.* (London, 1894), pp. 333–35; while *Fundinn Noregr* is edited and translated as a part of *Orkneyinga saga* (see next note).

7 *Orkneyinga saga. Legenda de Sancto Magno. Magnúss saga skemmri. Magnúss saga lengri. Helga þáttr ok Úlfs*, ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, Íslenzk fornrit 35 (Reykjavík, 1965), cc. 1–3, pp. 3–7. The most recent translation is Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, *Orkneyinga saga: The History of the Earls of Orkney* (London, 1978).

below will attempt to put these texts in their historical and cultural contexts, while also bringing out how similar origin stories can be differently inflected in different contexts.

2 How Iceland Was Settled

Íslendingabók opens with a prologue in which the author declares that he originally wrote it for the two bishops of Iceland, Þorlákr and Ketill, and showed it to Sæmundr the Priest.[8] He then revised it according to their suggestions and according to knowledge that became available to him subsequently, and it is this revised version which he presents. The author's name is revealed in the very last word of the present text, in which a genealogy beginning with the legendary King of the Turks Yngvi ends with "and I am called Ari."[9] From this we discover that he was Ari Þorgilsson (*c.*1067–1148), an author widely acknowledged and respected in later Icelandic historical works. From these facts and from other chronological pointers in the text, it is possible to date the work with some precision to the 1120s.[10] Within less than 130 years of the Icelanders' conversion to Christianity, Ari was able to produce a vernacular history of remarkable sophistication in terms of its obsession with correct chronology and its careful explanation of the reliability of its oral sources. The author does not refer to any native written sources, unless his reference to a 'saga' of St Edmund (c. 1) was to an Icelandic text rather than a Latin one, which seems unlikely. His references to popes and foreign rulers, in some cases using Latin chronological markers such as *Kalend. Junii* and *obiit Paschalus secundus* (c. 10), suggest that he had some annalistic sources in Latin, but he does not mention them specifically. The work contains an important reference to writing in Iceland in the vernacular, when it says that the decision was taken to write the laws of Iceland down in a book (c. 10) and we can deduce that this happened in 1117, just a few years before the 1120s. It is thus hard to find evidence of any vernacular writing in Iceland much earlier than Ari.

A further important aspect of *Íslendingabók* is the author's frequent and careful reference to the (oral) sources of his information, named individuals whom he knew personally and whom he identifies as "wise" or "learned" or

8 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, p. 1; Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, p. 3.

9 *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, p. 28; Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, p. 14. Subsequent references to this text are by chapter number, which are the same in the edition and the translation.

10 Grønlie, *Íslendingabók*, pp. x–xiv.

"knowledgeable." By this means, the chain of tradition extends back to the time of the conversion of Iceland, through Ari's teacher Teitr who had spoken to someone who had been an eyewitness to the events. Almost every major event in the book is ascribed to one or another of these informants, or someone they had spoken to. As a whole, the work is a remarkable example of source criticism applied to an oral tradition. It covers the history of Iceland, and particularly of its church, up until the time of writing. Clearly, its earliest sections, which describe the discovery and settlement of Iceland, are the furthest removed in time from Ari and his informants, and therefore probably based on less reliable information. Nevertheless, the nature of the work has meant that Ari's information has generally been accepted as correct.

Ari's account of the discovery and settlement of Iceland (cc. 1–3) is quite schematic, geared to his programme of writing a history of his relatively young nation, which he identifies as *Ísland*, the name of both the island and the polity established there. According to Ari, Iceland was settled entirely from Norway, so much so that there was a danger of the depopulation of Norway. The process happened quickly and neatly, within 60 years. Ari names one discoverer and primary settler, a Norwegian called Ingólfr. He then names four prominent settlers (including one woman), one in each of the four quarters of the island (these four quarters were the basis of the island's later legal and administrative structures, the establishment of which is also described by Ari): Hrollaugr Rǫgnvaldsson, Ketilbjǫrn Ketilbjǫrnsson, Auðr Ketilsdóttir, and Helgi Eyvindarson (c. 2). All four are identified as Norwegian, using the adjective *norrœnn* for Ketilbjǫrn and Helgi, and Auðr's father Ketill, while Hrollaugr is identified as the son of an earl of Møre in Norway. Auðr's father Ketill is further identified as a *hersir*, a high-ranking class of chieftains in Norway. All four turn out to be the ancestors of Icelandic bishops. Despite its early date, and the author's attachment to chronology and source criticism, *Íslendingabók*'s account of the migration to and settlement of Iceland is almost too neat, and not especially informative. A much fuller picture of the migration to Iceland emerges from *Landnámabók*.

Landnámabók is not in fact one text, but both a work in progress and a group of related texts.[11] Five versions of it survive, three medieval and two early modern (i.e. 17th-century). The two modern versions have text-critical value as they both used lost, earlier manuscripts. There are indications in the text that the

11 The detailed study of *Landnámabók* in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, pp. l-cliv, is summarized in English in Jakob Benediktsson, "*Landnámabók*. Some Remarks on its Value as a Historical Source," *Saga-Book* 17 (1966–69), 275–292.

process of gathering information about the settlement of Iceland started in the 12th century, possibly even with Ari himself. The earliest surviving version, *Sturlubók*, can be dated to the late 13th century, and it is possible to reconstruct a lost version from earlier in the 13th century that was its source. So *Landnámabók* cannot compare with *Íslendingabók* in terms of date, or closeness to and critical use of its sources, but it makes up for this in length and detail, as over 400 settlers are named along with where they settled and many members of their families. The traditional scholarly view has been that the text is a gradual accumulation of oral and written traditions in the form of genealogies and anecdotes about these first settlers, collected by medieval Icelanders who valued knowledge about their ancestry and origins, and that much of it is based on local knowledge. Revisionist views of the text have on the other hand presented it either as an attempt by the landowners of the 12th century to justify their holdings by tracing them back to, or even inventing, original settlers; or as a product of 12th-century learning, which did not hesitate to speculate where it had no information, or to make up the names of settlers from place-names.[12]

Landnámabók is structured geographically, clockwise around the island, naming the primary settler for some 430 locations. Most of the time, a chapter is devoted to each settler, and the basic information is the name of the settler and the name of the location he (or, very occasionally, she) settled. Usually, there is more information, which can include some account of the settler's ancestry, place of origin, and reasons for moving to Iceland, further information about the extent of the land-claim, or information about the settler's spouse, children, and descendants. Many of the chapters have also grown into mini-narratives about the settlers or sometimes even later generations, and the surviving versions are also influenced by the saga writing of the 13th century. There is no doubt that *Landnámabók* is a messier, more complicated source for the discovery of and migration to Iceland than *Íslendingabók*. Certainly the work is deceptive in the level of detail it seems to provide, and it is not necessarily a reliable source for the history of any one individual, family, or farm. But precisely because it has so much information, it is possible to study some of the patterns in *Landnámabók* without necessarily believing every word it says. The 13th- and 14th-century versions of *Landnámabók* have already evolved

12 Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, *Studier i Landnámabók: Kritiska bidrag till den isländska fristatstidens historia*, Bibliotheca historica Lundensis 33 (Lund, 1974); Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson, "Creating a Past: A Historiography of the Settlement of Iceland," in *Contact, Continuity and Collapse: The Norse Colonization of the North Atlantic*, ed. James H. Barrett, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 5 (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 139–61; see also Christopher Callow, "Putting Women in Their Place: Gender, Landscape and the Construction of *Landnámabók*," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7 (2011), 7–28, at pp. 11–12.

from a mere catalogue of settlers into something approaching a historical narrative, as demonstrated both by the way they introduce and rearrange the text, and by the introductory material appended to the catalogue.

In contrast to Ari's monolithic idea of Iceland having been discovered and first settled by one man, followed by an orderly migration from Norway, led by four distinguished Norwegians, a more complex narrative emerges from *Landnámabók*. This narrative is developed in the two most important medieval versions of the text, the late 13th-century *Sturlubók* and the early 14th-century *Hauksbók*. Such introductory chapters do not appear in the third medieval version of the text, known as *Melabók*, which appears to have a more archaic structure in that it is a purely geographical catalogue without the framing narrative.[13] The two revised versions introduce the catalogue of settlers with chapters on Iceland and its location, followed by a series of voyage and discovery narratives, and also rearrange the geography of the text by starting with Ingólfr's settlement, in the middle of the Southern Quarter, rather than at the quarter boundary as seems to have been the original arrangement, represented in *Melabók*. In this they follow Ari in privileging Ingólfr's settlement, at the same time complicating matters by also telling the stories of several earlier 'discoverers' who however did not make permanent settlements in Iceland. *Sturlubók* (cc. 3–5) names these as:

– a *víkingr* called Naddoddr who, with his companions, was driven off course when sailing from Norway to the Faroes;
– a man of Swedish origin called Garðarr Svávarsson;
– another *víkingr* called Flóki Vilgerðarson from the west of Norway.

Hauksbók (cc. 3–5) revises the crucial first discoverer of Iceland, naming Garðarr before Naddoddr, and adds some detail to several of these mini-narratives of discovery. However, both versions agree that Iceland was discovered by accident, when voyagers sailing to the north of Britain were driven off course. Both versions also agree that Iceland was discovered several times, accidentally and by people intending to find this place that they had heard of, but none of whom stayed there permanently until the significant primary settlement by Ingólfr. These multiple narratives of discovery may arouse suspicion in the literary-minded, particular that of Flóki, who finds Iceland by following three ravens in a story which has reminded readers of Noah and his Ark. This story is also suspiciously schematic in that Flóki has three companions who have different opinions (negative, neutral, and positive) about the viability of Iceland as a place for farming. The narratives about the 'discoverers' are then followed in both versions (cc. 6–10) by a more or less identical and quite

13 References are by version name and chapter number; see note 4.

lengthy story of Ingólfr and his foster-brother Hjǫrleifr, both from Norway, and their various adventures before settling down in Iceland, and the tribulations of Hjǫrleifr, in particular, after arriving in Iceland. This narrative also contains both a number of literary motifs and some anecdotes that seem to be derived from place-names.

The picture deriving from these introductory chapters is borne out by many of the subsequent chapters of *Lándnámabók*. Around a quarter of the 399 chapters in *Sturlubók* give information about where the settlers originated and/or where they departed from on their voyage to Iceland (not always the same thing), the places they stopped off along the way, and whether they were pagan, Christian, or undecided. We are also given a sense of the motivations behind their migration to Iceland. Mostly this is expressed in political terms—those who are given a reason for emigration are often presented as the political opponents of the tyrannical Norwegian king Haraldr *hárfagri* 'Fine-Hair' and it is indeed possible that this is a 13th-century view of the migration. But other motivations are also listed, including those of several settlers who were supporters of King Haraldr.

The 91 settlers whose personal origins are given can be divided into those who came from Norway (70, or 77 per cent) and those who came from somewhere else.[14] Whether they came from Norway, or Britain and Ireland, the geographical origin of the settlers can be stated either in a general way ('Norway,' 'the British Isles'), or in more geographical detail, specifying the regions from which the settler came. In the case of Norway, these include most of the historical provinces of that country: Oppland, Valdres, Telemark, Agder, Rogaland, Hordaland, Sogn og Fjordane, Møre og Romsdal, Trøndelag, Hålogaland. In the case of Britain the regions mentioned are Orkney, Caithness, and the Hebrides, as well as Ireland. In addition to the strong representation of Norway overall, a point of interest is the emphasis on regional identity within Norway.[15] Very few people (7, or 10 per cent) are said just to be 'Norwegian' or to have come from just 'Norway.' The rest are identified with either a wider region in Norway, as noted above, or a specific location, such as a valley, within that region. In fact, a large number of the references (30, or 43 per cent) are actually to a specific valley or other place within the region. A second point of interest is that these

14 For more detail on these figures, based on *Sturlubók* only, see Judith Jesch, "The Concept of 'Homeland' in the Viking Diaspora," in *Shetland and the Viking World*, ed. Val E. Turner, Olwyn A. Owen, and Doreen J. Waugh (Lerwick, 2016), pp. 141–46.

15 See also Gunnar Karlsson, "The Ethnicity of the Vinelanders," in *Norse Greenland. Selected Papers from the Hvalsey Conference 2008*, ed. Jette Arneborg, Georg Nyegaard, and Orri Vésteinsson, *Journal of the North Atlantic* Special Volume 2 (2009), pp. 126–30.

Norwegian regional identities could be transferred to Iceland, as shown by an interesting concentration of people from the inland Norwegian settlement of Voss in the East Fjords of Iceland (*Sturlubók* cc. 289, 294, 305, 314, 369). A third point of interest is the strong representation of settlers from the northern districts of Trøndelag and Hålogaland, which complicates the received wisdom that the settlers were predominantly from the south-west of Norway. Similarly, the relatively small number of references to settlers from places other than Norway is not entirely consonant with the well-aired contemporary genetic patterns which suggest that a substantial proportion of not only female but even male Icelandic settlers actually came from Britain and Ireland.[16] Various possible explanations can be found for this mismatch in addition to possible class and gender disparities, but the question is still open to debate.[17]

The key to the differing interpretations of the discovery and settlement of Iceland in *Íslendingabók* in the 12th century and *Landnámabók* in the 13th can be expressed in terms of the differences between 'migration' and 'diaspora.' Ari was writing at a time when the Icelandic nation, only just over two centuries old, was still in the throes of nation-building: establishing legal and administrative structures, adopting literacy, and establishing a unifying national religion. Ari's book about Icelanders and their nation locates this infant polity in relation to world history and aims to pinpoint its origins as well as its development. Ari creates an Icelandic identity at the national level by a number of means. He sees the origins of the Icelandic nation very much in terms of a migration from Norway and the re-establishment there of Norwegian law, specifically that of western Norway. He does not acknowledge that any of the settlers were Christians, but presents them as pagans who brought their practices with them, until the conversion of 999/1000 established a new kind of Icelandic collective identity. It is significant that, according to Ari, the whole nation agrees to adopt Christianity at once, at the General Assembly (c. 7). Ari's four prominent settlers demonstrate the transplantation of social and family structures that would be expected of a straightforward migration. Each settler

16 Agnar Helgason *et al.* "Estimating Scandinavian and Gaelic Ancestry in the Male Settlers of Iceland," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 67 (2000), 697–717; Agnar Helgason *et al.* "mtDNA and the Islands of the North Atlantic: Estimating the Proportions of Norse and Gaelic Ancestry," *American Journal of Human Genetics* 68 (2001), 723–37; Sara Goodacre et al., "Genetic Evidence for a Family-Based Scandinavian Settlement of Shetland and Orkney during the Viking Periods," *Heredity* 95 (2005), 129–35.

17 Orri Vésteinsson, "Ethnicity and Class in Settlement-Period Iceland," in *The Viking Age: Ireland and the West*, ed. John Sheehan and Donnchadh Ó Corráin (Dublin, 2010), pp. 494–510. Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, pp. 33–36, 56–58, 89–90.

is identified by a patronymic and is said to be the ancestor of a particular group of people. Two of them have high-ranking social origins, and all four are said to be Norwegian, ignoring the strong British and Irish element in the personal history of both Helgi and Auðr as suggested by other sources. By presenting a model of migration from a single country, followed by a linear development of the migrant society, Ari effectively creates the Icelandic nation and an Icelandic identity with a clear Norwegian origin.

Landnámabók may not show the same tendency to source criticism and strict chronology as *Íslendingabók*, but it may nevertheless reflect a truer picture in its overall patterns, which demonstrate various kinds of diversity. Firstly there is the diversity of the early voyagers. As outlined above, the first four come from a variety of places for a variety of reasons, and react to Iceland in a variety of ways. The process by which sailors are blown off course and 'discover' Iceland, and then report back, encouraging others to set out specifically for the new country, and the difficulties of finding it again, must have been how it really happened. The first reactions of these voyagers include their astonishment at the high mountains, the early snow, the sea ice, and the great bays in the west of Iceland. Their varying opinions about the suitability of the country for settlement must also represent the considered but varying judgement of experienced farmers. Even the first permanent settler Ingólfr does not settle in Iceland on his first voyage of exploration, but has to make extensive preparations for a second voyage, preparations that are both financial and spiritual. His settlement is a great undertaking and a great risk, and his friend Hjǫrleifr's undertaking comes to grief because he has not made sufficient preparation (expressed in the text as a failure to sacrifice before travelling). Secondly, the diversity of the Icelandic settlement is reflected in the places the settlers came from, their religious views, and their motivations for going to Iceland, as summarized above. Again, we do not need to believe these in every detail to acknowledge that the origins of a settlement as substantial as that of Iceland must have been geographically diverse, and that such a diverse community must have had a diversity of religious views and motivations for their settlement.

The Icelanders of the 12th and 13th centuries were well aware of their origins in this diaspora, and the traditions recorded in *Landnámabók* reflect their consciousness of connection both to the people and traditions of their homeland and to others elsewhere in the world who shared the same connection. If Ari knew this more complicated picture of the origins of his homeland, he had his reasons for wanting to simplify it—he wanted to tell a linear history of migration and nation-building, and had no room in his brief account for the messiness and diversity of the diasporic processes that formed that migration,

whereas the much longer *Landnámabók* cannot but reflect this diversity, not least because of its accumulative textual history. This tension between the two different views of Iceland's origins, as a straightforward migration from Norway, or as a product of the viking diaspora, continues throughout much of medieval Icelandic literary and historiographical production, and indeed into the scholarship and popular understanding of the present day. The 13th- and 14th-century Icelanders had a complicated relationship with the Norwegian homeland, and the authors of both *Sturlubók* and *Hauksbók* spent significant portions of their careers in Norway. In 1262–64, Iceland became subject to Norway, and the 'mother country' became both oppressor and opportunity. The idea that the Icelanders were originally freedom-loving Norwegians who left home to escape the tyranny of the king must have resonated with medieval Icelanders at the time of the submission to Norway, and is a common motif in the sagas.[18] At the same time, Icelandic poets and intellectuals were the official historiographers of the Norwegian kings, and were also responsible for the rather different texts outlining the origins of Norwegian homeland.

3 How Norway Was Settled

In contrast to Iceland, the human settlement of Norway took place long before historical times, as the ice receded and people moved in. The medieval accounts of this settlement are therefore in a quite different genre from the accounts of the settlement of Iceland, having much more of a mythical and legendary quality, and focusing on some eponymous leading ancestors rather than on whole populations. There are two texts which seem to build on the same traditions and which tell essentially the same story. Although both are preserved in the same late 14th-century manuscript, a compilation known as Flateyjarbók, they most likely originate at different times and in different cultural contexts, as will be discussed further below.[19]

The (probably) earlier of these is a short piece which the manuscript distinguishes with a heading *Fundinn Noregr* "Norway discovered."[20] It begins with a king called Fornjótr in the far north of Scandinavia. He has a number of male descendants, of whom the significant ones are his great-great-great-grandsons

18 Jesch, *The Viking Diaspora*, pp. 71, 84 n. 97.

19 See notes 6 and 7. The two texts are extensively discussed in Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389*, The Viking Collection 15 (Odense, 2005), pp. 316–36. References to *Fundinn Noregr* and *Orkneyinga saga* in the following are to chapter numbers.

20 Copenhagen, Gamle kongelige samling 1005 fol., fol. 29r; *Flateyjarbók*, 1, p. 219.

Nórr and Górr, and their sister (the first female figure to be mentioned), Gói, who promptly disappears at a midwinter sacrifice organized by their father Þorri. Three years later, after fruitless searching, her brothers set out to look for her further afield, dividing things up so that Nórr travels overland and Górr searches the coast and the offshore islands. Their itineraries are described in some detail, with copious use of place-names, in a geographical tour-de-force encompassing most of Scandinavia, and with some descriptions of the landscape and references to the people they encountered. Nórr, in particular, uses his journey to conquer everywhere he went, defeating local rulers where necessary. The text thus presents a picture of him basically conquering most of inland Norway. More briefly, Górr is said to have conquered the coastal regions, and the brothers agree to divide up the rule in this way. Eventually Nórr finds his sister in the Oppland region, where she had been kidnapped by a king called Hrólfr, the son of a giant. After an inconclusive duel, the two men are reconciled, with Hrólfr keeping Gói and Nórr marrying Hrólfr's sister. The country conquered by Nórr is named by him *Noruegr* and he rules it as long as he lives and his sons after him. They, however, divide things between themselves so that their dominions are diminished and become provinces. Meanwhile, the sons of Górr attack the sons of Nórr, with variable results, though Beitir manages to acquire a large part of the region called Þrándheimr (modern Trøndelag).

Despite the heading *Fundinn Noregr*, and the fact that the only medieval manuscript to preserve this text is the 14th-century Flateyjarbók, scholars agree that it is not an independent text but is there because it forms the beginning of *Orkneyinga saga*, one of the several sagas that the scribes of Flateyjarbók interweave into their accounts of the Norwegian kings Óláfr Tryggvason and Óláfr Haraldsson. The first part of this saga (including *Fundinn Noregr*) was added by the first scribe, Jón Þórðarson. *Orkneyinga saga* has to be reconstructed from the incomplete and often unsatisfactory text of Flateyjarbók, plus a number of earlier manuscripts which survive only as fragments, some only a leaf or two. Like *Landnámabók*, it can therefore also be described as a 'work in progress.'[21] The association of *Fundinn Noregr* with the saga is however made relatively certain by the fact that an early modern translation of a lost medieval manuscript of the saga which appears to have been complete has an equivalent text for its first chapters.[22] Whether *Fundinn Noregr* was a part of *Orkneyinga saga*

21 Judith Jesch, "*Orkneyinga saga*: A Work in Progress?," in *Creating the Medieval Saga: Versions, Variability and Editorial Interpretations of Old Norse Saga Literature*, ed. Judy Quinn and Emily Lethbridge, The Viking Collection 18 (Odense, 2010), pp. 153–73.

22 Stockholm, Kungliga Biblioteket, Cod. Isl. Papp. 39 fol.

from when it was first composed around 1200, and how the text then blends in with the Orcadian origin legends of that saga are matters which will be discussed below. First, however, a comparison with *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* "How Norway Was Settled," also in Flateyjarbók, is necessary.

Hversu Noregr bygðisk does not survive anywhere other than in Flateyjarbók, and it was added to that manuscript, along with several other texts, by the second scribe, Magnús Þórhallsson.[23] It begins by explaining that it will demonstrate not only how Norway was first settled, but also how royal dynasties, both there and in other countries, came about. It then proceeds with Fornjótr and his descendants, as *Fundinn Noregr* did. The text is more expansive than *Fundinn Noregr*, with more detail and frequent reference to the weather and other natural phenomena. For example, it is said that the purpose of the sacrifice by Þorri was to ensure snowfall and thus good skiing conditions. Otherwise it tells essentially the same story, of Nórr's and Górr's search for their sister, but with more geographical and biographical detail. For example, Hrólfr's mother and sister are both named as well as his father. However, once Nórr tracks down his sister with Hrólfr the two texts go their separate ways. In *Fundinn Noregr*, Nórr and Hrólfr fight before becoming reconciled, while in *Hversu Noregr bygðisk*, Gói is already married to Hrólfr, and when Nórr arrives, they submit to him. Similarly, while in *Fundinn Noregr* Górr is presented as attacking Nórr, in *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* they are portrayed as coming to an amicable agreement in which they divide Norway so that Nórr has the mainland and Górr all the islands which are on his port side as he sails along the coast. Both texts do however describe how Górr's son Beitir acquires some inland districts by the expedient of dragging his ship overland (*Fundinn Noregr*) or adding sledge-runners to his ship and moving it overland over the snow (*Hversu Noregr bygðisk*).

Having thus established the descendants of Górr in the region of Namdalen in central Norway, *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* becomes an extensive genealogical and geographical list of the various regions of Norway and their often eponymous rulers and their descendants. This is a long passage, stuffed with a large number of personal and place-names, the former sometimes including women and the latter including the names of watercourses and valleys as well as regions and provinces. Some of the names are explained through brief anecdotes, such as Bjǫrn, who is the son of the sister of a giant, and so is called Jǫtunbjǫrn 'Giant-Bjǫrn,' or his brother Brandr, who is given to the gods by his father and so was called Guðbrandr 'God-Brandr.' The text essentially provides a historical tour of Norway, covering all of its regions south of Namdalen, and

23 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, pp. 316–36.

extending into what is now Sweden, with brief genealogical notices of those who ruled in the different regions.

In Flateyjarbók, *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is followed by more genealogies, which in some cases link back to people mentioned in the previous text and, once again, list often eponymous rulers of various parts of Norway. Starting with various ancestors (including both Odin and Adam), the genealogies all culminate in Haraldr *hárfagri* 'Fine-Hair.' This king is highly significant in Icelandic historiography, both for his supposed role in the settlement of Iceland, as noted above, but also because he is ascribed the important political feat of having united Norway into a single kingdom, instead of a set of provinces ruled by the eponymous kings who appeared in the earlier genealogies. Once Haraldr's origins are established, a passage headed *Huerir konungar styrt hafa Noregi* "The Kings Who Have Governed Norway" follows. Beginning with Haraldr, this culminates in Óláfr Hákonarson, the king to whose rule (specifically, to 1387) the writing of the book by the first scribe Jón Þórðarson is dated by the second scribe Magnús Þórhallsson, while *Hversu Nóregr bygðisk* and the subsequent genealogies were added to the manuscript by the latter some years later, probably in 1390.[24] Although *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* does envisage various kings and other rulers spreading across Norway from a far northern origin, the title is a misnomer, in that there is little sense in this text or its associated material of the population of the country and its settlement. Rather the text focuses on how the country was ruled, and the kings are very much kings of particular territories, rather than of groups of people inhabiting those territories.

Certain patterns are emerging in these Icelandic and Norwegian origin stories. The emphasis in *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* on the different regions of Norway resonates with the regional origins of the settlers of Iceland in *Landnámabók*, as discussed above, suggesting that this regionalism remains an important feature of identity throughout the period in which these texts were produced. But from the point of view of national origins, *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is more like *Íslendingabók* in its narrow focus on the inevitable process which leads to the emergence of a single nation. What it does not have is the pan-Scandinavian geographical compass of *Fundinn Noregr*, which in its turn resonates with the diversity of settler origins that can be found in *Landnámabók*. These two might be seen as texts of historical memory produced in a diasporic context, while *Íslendingabók* and *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* tend more towards national

24 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, pp. 316–36; for more detail on the writing and the purpose of Flateyjarbók, see Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir, "Für welchen Empfänger wurde die Flateyjarbók ursprünglich konzipiert?," in *Opuscula*, vol. 13, ed. Britta Olrik Fredriksen and Jonna Louis-Jensen, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 47 (Copenhagen, 2010), pp. 1–53.

mythmaking. The picture is slightly clouded by the fact that *Landnámabók* has elements of both trends, arising no doubt from the complexity of its textual history. The case of the Orkney earldom further illustrates some of these complexities.

4 Origins of the Orkney Earls

As noted above, *Fundinn Noregr* appears to be an integral part of *Orkneyinga saga*, an Icelandic saga about the earls of Orkney which has some similarities with the sagas of Norwegian kings and was written at a time (the early 13th century) when the earldom was a part of the kingdom of Norway. The title *Fundinn Noregr* is taken from *Flateyjarbók*, where it in fact only applies to the first chapter of the saga, although in scholarship it is usually used as a name for the text that extends across the first three saga chapters. As often in this manuscript, the chapter headings can be misleading and the chapter divisions somewhat arbitrary, since the naming of Norway does not occur until the following chapter. As already noted, the 17th-century translation, the only other manuscript to contain this part of the saga, does not have any heading at the beginning of the text.[25] The heading *Fundinn Noregr* is thus very likely an invention of the scribe of Flateyjarbók, along with those of the subsequent chapters: *Ferd Nórs eftir Noregi at leita sy*(*s*)*stur* (*sinnar*) "Nórr's Journey along Norway to Look for His Sister" and *Beitir feck Noregh* "Beitir Obtained Norway."[26] This fits with the overall concept of Flateyjarbók, which is to compile a continuous history of the Norwegian kingdom in more or less chronological order.[27]

In its presumably original context of an independent *Orkneyinga saga*, *Fundinn Noregr* is less obviously about the origins of Norway, and more like an introductory genealogy for the earls of Orkney, who are descended from the last person named in chapter 3, a certain Rǫgnvaldr *hinn ríki ok hinn ráðsvinni* 'The Powerful and the Wisely-Deciding.' Chapter 4 then explains how Rǫgnvaldr is granted the earldom of Møre in Norway by King Haraldr Fine-Hair, and then subsequently Shetland and Orkney in compensation for the loss of one of his sons when following Haraldr in battle. There is a complicated series of events before Rǫgnvaldr's youngest, illegitimate son Einarr becomes the first ruler of

25 Stockholm, Papp. 39 fol., fol. 1r.

26 *Flateyjarbók*, 1, pp. 220–21.

27 Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir, "Die Flateyjarbók und der Anfang ihrer Óláfs saga helga," in *Opuscula*, vol. 14, ed. Britta Olrik Fredriksen *et al.*, Bibliotheca Arnamagnæana 48 (Copenhagen, 2016), pp. 177–214, at p. 180.

Orkney, and the history of the earldom proper begins. The effect of this narrative is to link Orkney's origins inextricably to those of Norway and its earls to that monarchy. With the descent of the Norwegian kings from Nórr and the Orkney earls from Górr, the two polities are placed on an equal footing, at least genealogically. At the same time, subtle differences between the two are implicit in the story. It is no accident that Nórr travels overland on skis, whereas Górr's travels are by ship. Skiing is a skill that is closely associated with Norway in Old Icelandic texts and, indeed, Norway has an appropriate climate and landscape through which skiing was almost the only feasible mode of overland transport in winter at that time. The text several times has Nórr waiting for the snow to travel, it is as if he has no other means of transport. Orkney, on the other hand, is not a suitable climate or landscape for skiing and its relatively small islands are most easily reached by ship. Górr, his two sons, and his grandson are described in *Fundinn Noregr* as *sækonungar* "sea-kings," anticipating the thalassocracy of their descendants the earls of Orkney. Unlike *Hversu Noregr bygðisk*, *Fundinn Noregr* is less fixated on royal dynasties and genealogies, and, despite being shorter, gives a better sense of other peoples of Scandinavia. Thus, Górr finds relatives, also descended from Fornjótr, in Denmark, whereas Nórr encounters, and overcomes, hostile Lapps in the north, and the local inhabitants in an unnamed fjord district in the west. Some of the references to the names of places and things are introduced by *þeir kǫlluðu* "they called," giving a sense of a population in the landscape.

The overall picture presented in *Fundinn Noregr* thus sets the stage for the rest of *Orkneyinga saga*. Orkney is an independent polity, closely linked to and dependent on Norway, junior but equal. It is also a participant in a wider diasporic world that reaches from across northern Britain to Iceland and, later on in the saga, out into the wider world.

5 Origins of Origin Stories

The Icelandic origin stories embedded in *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* clearly derive from the lived experience and memory of the people who settled the island in the 9th century and whose descendants wrote about these momentous events. While *Íslendingabók* may be overly schematic, and *Landnámabók* may be confusingly self-contradictory, and both contain obviously mythical material, there is no doubt that these accounts contain at least some element of historical truth, describing something close to what actually happened, and that that was indeed their intention. This raises the question of the kind of memory that is involved and how that works in a diasporic framework

as suggested here.[28] Memory is central to diaspora, but diaspora is multilateral, reciprocal, and ongoing. It goes beyond simple historical memory because it causes memory to be refreshed, or (re-)invented, through diasporic contacts across time. It is proposed here that the concept of diaspora provides a framework within which to understand and explain the ways in which historiographical works like *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* engage with the past. The explanatory power of diaspora theory is that it does not underestimate the significance of the present in which they were written and consumed, while still focusing on the past that they describe. A diasporic understanding encompasses the whole period from the described past through to the time of writing, in contrast to theories of cultural memory, which tend to emphasize the present in which texts were produced.[29] Diaspora theory enables us to see these works as neither a simple, transmitted memory of the past, nor as a thoroughly contemporized past, but as something in between, as exemplified in their accounts of the settlement of Iceland. How this knowledge of the past was transmitted and transformed until it came to be written down 250–300 years later is hard to determine in the absence of clear evidence for the process. But it is of interest that the learned Icelanders who wrote about their own origins did not introduce any especially fantastical origin legends or learned constructions into these narratives. They certainly incorporated some motifs from Christian and 'learned' tradition, but these are often interestingly interwoven with uniquely Icelandic myths, such as the multiple references to the high-seat pillars that a number of settlers were said to have brought from home and thrown overboard when nearing Iceland to help determine their place of settlement.[30]

Fundinn Noregr and *Hversu Noregr bygðisk*, on the other hand, give an impression of containing much more of such learned constructions. The naming of the country of Norway after the eponymous Nórr is consonant with the explanation given in the *Historia Norwegie*, written in Norway in Latin in the 12th century.[31] There has been much scholarly discussion of the sons of Fornjótr, whose names Hlér,[32] Logi, and Kári ('Sea-calm,' 'Flame,' and 'North Wind')

28 Judith Jesch, "Diaspora," in *Handbook of Pre-modern Nordic Memory Studies*, ed. Jürg Glauser, Pernille Hermann, and Stephen A. Mitchell (Berlin, 2018), pp. 583–93.

29 E.g. Jan Assmann, "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125–33.

30 Jonas Wellendorf, "The Interplay of Pagan and Christian Traditions in Icelandic Settlement Myths," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 109 (2010), 1–21.

31 *Historia Norwegie*, ed. Inger Ekrem and Lars Boje Mortensen (Odense, 2003), p. 113.

32 In an aside, *Fundinn Noregr* (*Orkneyinga saga* c. 1) notes that "we call him Ægir," the name of the god of the sea in Old Norse mythology.

represent the natural forces of sea, flame, and wind. They are attested in other texts as well as those discussed here, and much of the discussion has centred on whether they are ancient mythology or learned speculation from the 12th century.[33] The fact that Fornjótr is said to be a giant in Snorri Sturluson's *Edda* suggests that this is ancient mythology, though it should be noted that neither of the two texts discussed here actually call him a giant, rather he has been 'euhemerised' as a king.[34] Preben Meulengracht Sørensen concluded that these genealogical myths were originally "a means of historical interpretation and mythical thinking" and that it was "the Christian authors who transform the mythical genealogies into history."[35] But he drew a contrast between the Orcadian genealogy, in which the earls descend directly from the northern king Fornjótr, and the origin myths of the Danish and Norwegian royal dynasties, which have "a mythical ancestry outside the Scandinavian countries," through the arrival of Óðinn and his followers in the north, and a "noble Trojan ancestry."[36]

Following this line of reasoning, which emphasizes the 'northernness' of the Orkney earls, and noting that the focus in both *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is much more on the descendants of Fornjótr than on the supposed giant origins of this dynasty, we might speculate that the Orcadian origin story does indeed derive from indigenous traditions, despite the learned accretions. However, it is difficult to take this speculation much further from lack of evidence, though Meulengracht Sørensen's analysis suggests that the sources of these narratives most likely took the form of genealogies.[37] But it should be possible to explore the historical contexts in which these two texts took the form in which they survive and thus to get some idea of their significance. This is potentially a tricky matter since it is not possible to assign authorship or date or place of composition definitively to either text, and the whole question of what processes were involved in the authorship and composition of medieval

33 Margaret Clunies Ross, "Snorri Sturluson's Use of the Norse Origin-Legend of the Sons of Fornjótr in his *Edda*," *Arkiv för nordisk filologi* 98 (1983), 47–66; Claus Krag, *Ynglingatal og ynglingesaga* (Oslo, 1991), pp. 47–67; Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, "The Sea, the Flame and the Wind. The Legendary Ancestors of the Earls of Orkney," in *The Viking Age in Caithness, Orkney and the North Atlantic*, ed. Colleen E. Batey, Judith Jesch, and Christopher D. Morris (Edinburgh, 1993), pp. 212–21.

34 Meulengracht Sørensen, "The Sea, the Flame and the Wind," p. 213.

35 Meulengracht Sørensen, "The Sea, the Flame and the Wind," pp. 213, 217.

36 Meulengracht Sørensen, "The Sea, the Flame and the Wind," pp. 218–19.

37 Meulengracht Sørensen, "The Sea, the Flame and the Wind," p. 214.

Norse texts is in any case a complex one and a matter which is far too big to consider here.[38]

6 Historical Contexts of Origin Stories

To explore the milieux in which the Norwegian and Orcadian origin stories came into being in their surviving forms, we can do little more than to rely on scholarly hypotheses about their times of composition. *Orkneyinga saga* is thought originally to have been composed around 1200–10, though its most recent editor supposed that the *Fundinn Noregr* section was added later as his view was that it was first composed by Snorri Sturluson.[39] A result of this line of thinking would be that the version of the saga recorded in Flateyjarbók must be later and Elizabeth Ashman Rowe proposes a date range of 1225–30 for this.[40] Snorri's input is unprovable, but at least this rather speculative hypothesis would not move the date of *Fundinn Noregr* from the putative earlier version of the saga without this introduction by very much, only two to three decades. There is however more uncertainty about the dating of *Hversu Noregr bygðisk*. Elizabeth Ashman Rowe has proposed a *terminus post quem* of 1225–30 assuming, along with several earlier scholars, that it is based on *Fundinn Noregr*, which she dates as noted above. The *terminus ante quem* is more difficult to establish and Rowe's argument for 1280–90 is weak, depending on the possibility that *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* was a source for another text, the dating of which is similarly uncertain, and based on fairly vague textual similarities.[41] It is probably more realistic to take the date when the text was added to Flateyjarbók, i.e. around 1390, as the latest possible date.[42] This would suggest that *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* was the composition of the scribe who added it to the manuscript, Magnús Þórhallsson, based probably on some earlier account of unknown form. This would still fit with Rowe's overall interpretation of this scribe's agenda; she even suggests that *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is "the clearest

38 For discussion, see many of the contributions in *Modes of Authorship in the Middle Ages*, ed. Slavica Ranković and Ingvil Brügger Budal (Toronto, 2012); *Dating the Sagas: Reviews and Revisions*, ed. Else Mundal (Copenhagen, 2013); and *Moving Words in the Nordic Middle Ages*, ed. Amy Mulligan and Else Mundal (Turnhout, 2019).

39 *Orkneyinga saga*, ed. Finnbogi Guðmundsson, pp. viii, xiv-xvi.

40 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, p. 317.

41 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, p. 317.

42 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, pp. 11–12.

indication of his own views."[43] It is therefore not necessary to assume an earlier date of composition of the text in its current form, especially given that it is not preserved in any other manuscript.

Since there is a possibility that *Fundinn Noregr* is as early as 1200 (if it was originally a part of *Orkneyinga saga*) and *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* is as late as 1390 (if composed by the second scribe of *Flateyjarbók*), it is worth using these extreme dates to explore the possible historical contexts that pertained in the viking diaspora at those times, and which might illuminate the uses of such origin stories. It so happens that these rough dates coincide fairly closely with significant moments in the history of the Orkney earldom in relation to the Norwegian kingdom:[44]

> Just as the year 1195 marks the subordination of the Northern Isles to the realm of Norway, the installation of Henry Sinclair as earl of Orkney in 1379 … signals the coming transition of Orkney from Norwegian to Scottish sovereignty in 1468.

Both 1195 and 1379 seem like historical moments when questions of origins would have been particularly salient both for the Orcadians themselves and for those interested in, and writing, the histories of both Orkney and Norway, and it is not implausible to think that these events coloured the writing of these origin stories in each case a decade or a little more later.

Barbara Crawford has outlined what happened at these significant moments. Earl Haraldr Maddaðarson was a long-ruling (1158–1206) and powerful earl who attempted to stand up to the "more powerful and very ambitious kings … ruling in both Scotland and Norway."[45] In 1195 he submitted to King Sverrir of Norway after a failed insurrection, losing control of Shetland (though he did regain control of it for a few years before his death in 1206). This led to a new administrative relationship between the Northern Isles and Norway. In this new relationship, Shetland's role was as a nodal point between western Norway and the Faeroes and Iceland, so that when it no longer formed part of the earldom, the Orkney islands, much closer to mainland Scotland, became less integrated into

43 Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók*, p. 348; Kolbrún Haraldsdóttir, "Für welchen Empfänger" is more inclined to emphasize continuity of purpose between the two scribes, rather than Rowe's idea that Magnús had a different agenda than Jón.

44 Steinar Imsen, "Earldom and Kingdom: Orkney in the Realm of Norway 1195–1379," in *The Faces of Orkney: Stones, Skalds and Saints*, ed. Doreen J. Waugh with Alison Finlay (Edinburgh, 2003), pp. 65–80, at p. 65.

45 Barbara E. Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms: Orkney and Caithness from AD 870 to 1470* (Edinburgh, 2013), p. 240.

this northern maritime world.[46] Although the end result was that Haraldr had to focus more on the Scottish side of things, and on Orkney, just the other side of the Pentland Firth, at the time all this was playing out the question of parity between the Orkney earldom and Norway would be particularly salient. While the Shetlandic part of the earldom remained closely connected with Norway long after this time, during the rule of Haraldr, the earldom's Orcadian base had more need to assert both its parity with and connections to Norway to resist incipient Scottish encroachment and so provide Haraldr with "a secure refuge in his confrontation with King William."[47] Michael Chesnutt has discussed other evidence that materials emanating from northern Scotland and regarding the time of Haraldr Maddaðarson were transmitted to Iceland in the 13th century.[48] This opens up the possibility of literary activity regarding the history of the Orkney earldom during his rule, a time which also saw a veritable cultural renaissance in Orkney.[49] It is not too difficult to place the impetus for *Fundinn Noregr* in this time. Even if we resist, as most scholars have done, asserting an Orcadian composition for *Orkneyinga saga*, it is clear that the saga, with its wealth of accurate information about Orkney, depends heavily on local traditions, transmitted through Icelandic composition.[50] Icelandic interest in Orkney can be dated quite closely to the period 1175–1220, during which Orcadians successfully competed with Norwegian merchants in Icelandic trade. With the demise of the Oddaverjar clan, who had promoted these contacts, Norwegian influence in Iceland reasserted itself as its monarchy, supported by Snorri Sturluson, grew stronger.[51] It seems that *Orkneyinga saga*, including, I would suggest, *Fundinn Noregr*, was part of this flowering of Icelandic Orkneyphilia.

At the other end of the time frame, the relationship between Orkney and Norway throughout the 14th century is complicated by growing interference from Scotland. The first "major Scottish magnate" to be earl in Orkney was Malise *c*.1330–50. Between 1350 and 1379, there was no earl and this absence led to increased royal control from Norway, which appears to have been resented in Orkney. From 1379, the Sinclair earls in Orkney were the "biggest agents for change" and "one of the most powerful nobles in the Scottish kingdom," but

46 Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms*, pp. 242–46, 260.

47 Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms*, p. 261.

48 Michael Chesnutt, "*Haralds saga Maddaðarsonar*," in *Speculum Norroenum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke et al. (Odense, 1981), pp. 33–55.

49 See a number of the contributions in *St Magnus Cathedral and Orkney's Twelfth-Century Renaissance*, ed. Barbara E. Crawford (Aberdeen, 1988); and *The World of Orkneyinga saga: "The Broad-Cloth Viking Trip,"* ed. Olwyn Owen (Kirkwall, 2005).

50 Chesnutt, "*Haralds saga*," p. 33.

51 Helgi Þorláksson, "Snorri Sturluson og Oddaverjar," in *Snorri: átta alda minning*, ed. Gunnar Karlsson and Helgi Þorláksson (Reykjavík, 1979), pp. 53–88, at pp. 62–70.

"both ecclesiastical and other ruling groups in Orkney were committed to the maintenance of the Norwegian links."[52] However, despite this commitment the Scottification of Orkney was inevitable, with the further complication of a joint Danish-Norwegian monarchy and then regency from 1380 and, ultimately, Danish dominance until a Danish king transferred the islands to Scotland in 1468–69. As noted above, the texts that follow *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* in Flateyjarbók culminate in the reign of the Norwegian king Óláfr Hákonarson, who died in 1387, to be succeeded by his mother, the Danish queen Margaret I, as regent. From the point of view of Iceland, the political situation in this turbulent time would tend to highlight Norwegian history. When Norway itself was losing its prominence, its dominions in the west paled into insignificance. Also, by this time, there is little evidence for direct contact between Iceland and northern Scotland. It is thus no surprise that *Hversu Noregr bygðisk*, even if based on *Fundinn Noregr*, has no mention of the origins of the earls of Orkney.

7 Conclusion

If we pay attention to these particular historical contexts, assuming the dates proposed above, then it is possible to suggest reasons why the superficially similar origin stories of *Fundinn Noregr* and *Hversu Noregr bygðisk* are actually so different. The simplest explanation seems to be that *Fundinn Noregr* was a part of the original version of *Orkneyinga saga* composed before or around *c.*1200, and that it represents a view of Orkney as wholly Scandinavian and connected to, and in some sense equal to, its Norwegian overlord. This view most likely derives from Orkney itself, which was experiencing a cultural renaissance at the time, and reached Iceland in the late 12th or early 13th century. As part of the larger saga, *Fundinn Noregr* was incorporated into Flateyjarbók as part of its late 14th-century project of writing a chronological history of the Norwegian realm, but it is in many ways a fossil of an earlier time. *Hversu Noregr byggðisk*, on the other hand, which ignores Orkney completely, despite telling the same origin story for Norway, represents a time in the late 14th century when Orkney, despite still maintaining its own close links to Norway, was no longer a part of the Norwegian world as viewed from Iceland.

Even if the details of the argument made above are incorrect (and they are quite likely to be, given the uncertainties over dating and authorship of these texts), the overall pattern is clear. A careful reading of these origin stories, and their manuscript and historical contexts, reveals the changing views of

52 Crawford, *The Northern Earldoms*, pp. 319, 325, 331–32, 341.

learned Icelanders about not only their own origins, but also those of their cousins in both Norway and northern Scotland. Old Icelandic literature is one of our main gateways to understanding the viking diaspora, that expansion of Scandinavians and Scandinavian culture into other parts of the world that resulted from Viking Age migration and settlement, as expressed most clearly for Iceland in the early work *Íslendingabók*. The diasporic consciousness which had developed out of the close personal contacts between Norway, Orkney, and Iceland established in the Viking Age is clearly reflected in *Landnámabók* and *Orkneyinga saga*, both largely products of the late 12th and 13th centuries. In the late 14th-century compilation Flateyjarbók, we see the unravelling of this diasporic consciousness as Iceland becomes a distant observer of the politics of Scandinavia. Iceland became subsumed into first Norway and then Denmark, and northern Scotland, which also went through that process, soon became instead a part of the kingdom of Scotland with the impignoration of 1468–69. By then the polities discussed here had ceased to exist in their previous form and their origins in the viking diaspora had become irrelevant, even if contacts of various kinds have continued up to the present day.

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CHAPTER 6

The Origin Legend of the Goths in the *Getica* by Jordanes

Robert Kasperski

> The same mighty sea has also in its arctic region, that is in the north, a great island named Scandza, from which my tale (by God's grace) shall take its beginning. For the race whose origin you ask to know burst forth like a swarm of bees from the midst of this island and came into the land of Europe. But how or in what wise we shall explain hereafter, if it be the Lord's will.[1]
>
> JORDANES

The work *De origine actibusque Getarum* (*Getica* in short) by a mysterious Constantinopolitan author who calls himself Jordanes, completed sometime after March 551, tells the story of the journey of the Goths from the northern island of Scandza to the lands on the shores of the Pontic Sea (the Black Sea).[2] Historians have long asked themselves where Jordanes learned about this migration. Some scholars believe that his sources were the tribal tales of the Goths. The tales were supposedly familiar to Jordanes, who was himself a Goth by descent. It is also claimed that members of Gothic royal dynasties, such as the Amali—who were the rulers of the Ostrogoths—preserved in oral form the

1 Charles C. Mierow, *The Gothic History of Jordanes* (London, 1915), p. 53; Jordanes, *Getica*, 9, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, auctores Antiquissimi 5.1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. 55–56: "habet quoque is ipse inmensus pelagus in parte artoa, id est septentrionali, amplam insulam nomine Scandzam, unde nobis sermo, si dominus iubaverit, est adsumpturus, quia gens, cuius originem flagitas, ab huius insulae gremio velut examen apium erumpens in terram Europae advinit: quomodo vero aut qualiter, in subsequentibus, si dominus donaverit, explanavimus."

2 Jordanes, *Getica*, 25–42, pp. 60–64.

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tribal tradition of the Goths.[3] One of the most important themes retained by this tribal tradition was the legend of the migration from Scandza. These views were, in turn, contended by other scholars, according to whom Jordanes may not have been a Goth, and the story itself has nothing to do with the Gothic tribal tradition.[4]

Walter Goffart claims that the legend was an original invention of the author of *Getica*, who partook in a historiographical and political debate held in Constantinople in the 550s.[5] The subject of this debate was the key political issue of the period of the war between the Eastern Roman empire and the Goths, namely, the question what should be done with these barbarians after the expected final victory of the imperial troops in Italy (and perhaps even in Spain)? The war of Emperor Justinian I (r. 527–65) with the Ostrogoths residing in Italy began in 535, and around 551 an imperial expeditionary force was sent to Spain to support the Visigothic king Agila (r. 549–54) against the rebel Athanagild (or, as Isidore of Seville maintains, to help Athanagild oppose Agila).[6] Procopius of Caesarea, a contemporary of Jordanes, wrote in the last book of his work *History of the Wars* that after the death of their king, Teia (d. 552), the Goths did not want to be subjected to the emperor but wanted to live independently along with other barbarians, and such was the message they sent to the imperial general, Narses (d. 573).[7] In the course of the negotiations, it was established that after retrieving the money that they had deposited in the fortresses they occupied, the Goths were to leave the entire Italian Peninsula. They took the oath and confirmed the terms of the agreement. Procopius suggested that the Goths—with the exception of a group of 1,000 warriors

3 Herwig Wolfram, *Die Goten: Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts; Entwurf einer historischen Ethnographie*, Frühe Völker, 4th ed. (Munich, 2009), pp. 47–50.

4 See Walter Goffart, *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. 62–66; idem, "Two Notes on Germanic Antiquity Today," *Traditio* 50 (1995), 9–30.

5 See Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (A.D. 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, Publications in Medieval Studies (Princeton, 2009), pp. 88–96.

6 Jordanes, *Getica*, 303, p. 136; Isidore of Seville, *Chronica*, 399, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi 11 (Berlin, 1894), p. 475; see also Brian Croke, "Jordanes and the Immediate Past," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 54, no. 4 (2005), 473–94, at p. 491; Roger Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409–711*, A History of Spain (Oxford, 2004), pp. 47–48; cf. E.A. Thompson, *The Goths in Spain* (London, 1969), pp. 325–28; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 212. Both Thompson and Goffart suppose that the real aim of Liberius's expedition was to conquer Spain.

7 Procopius, *Wars*, 8.35.33–36, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing, *History of Wars*, 7 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1914–40), 5:416–19. Most of the translations from Procopius's works are adapted from Dewing.

who marched to Ticinum (Pavia) led *inter alia* by a Gothic commander named Indulf—were on their way to leave Italy.[8] Although in reality the Goths never left Italian territory, Procopius became the voice of all those who wanted the barbarian peoples to leave—either voluntarily or by force—from the territories recovered by the empire.[9] Additionally, this historian presents Justinian as an enemy of the barbarians with a burning hatred for "the Gothic name" who intended "to drive it out absolutely from the Roman domain" (this information was given on the occasion of the events taking place in 551).[10] Procopius in his works advocated an idea—as Goffart brilliantly argued—"that the empire could look forward to such a thing as a barbarian final solution: they would leave for the ends of earth."[11]

Interestingly, Justinian's victory over the barbarian peoples and expulsion of them beyond the borders of the empire was considered to be one of his greatest achievements, which Procopius mentions in another work, "On Buildings" (*De aedificiis*), which was published sometime between 554 and 561. In this work, he writes that Justinian made the empire even "greater in extent, but also much more illustrious, by expelling from it those barbarians who had from of old pressed hard upon it."[12]

Both works, *Getica* and *History of the Wars*, were written at around the same time. Jordanes completed the *Getica* sometime after March 551 and may have published it a few years later, as scholars have recently suggested.[13] Some argue that it was published in 554, after Justinian promulgated the *Constitutio*

8 Ibid., 8.35.38, pp. 418–19.

9 Procopius's statement that the Goths were on their way to leave Italy is contradicted by Agathias, *Historiae*, 1.1.1, ed. B.G. Niebuhr, Corpus scriptorum historiae Byzantinae 3 (Bonn, 1828); p. 14; Agathias, *The Histories*, 1.1.1, trans. Joseph D. Frendo, Corpus fontium historiae Byzantinae (Berlin, 1975), p. 9; see also Averil Cameron, *Agathias* (Oxford, 1970), p. 43; Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 96.

10 Procopius, *Wars*, 8.24.5, pp. 304–05; I have used the translation by Anthony Kaldellis—Prokopios, *The Wars of Justinian*, 8.24.5, trans. H.B. Dewing, revised and modernized with an introduction and notes by Anthony Kaldellis (Indianapolis, 2014), p. 517; see also Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 69.

11 Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 96.

12 Procopius, *De aedificiis*, 1.1.6, ed. and trans. H.B. Dewing (London, 1940), pp. 5–6.

13 See Goffart, *The Narrators*, pp. 97–105; Walter Pohl, "Creating Cultural Resources for Carolingian Rule: Historians of the Christian Empire," in *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick, Clemens Gantner, and Sven Meeder (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 15–33, at 22; cf. Alexander Sarantis, "War and Diplomacy in Pannonia and the Northwest Balkans during the Reign of Justinian: The Gepid Threat and Imperial Responses," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 63 (2009), 15–40, at p. 36.

pragmatica.[14] The first seven books of *History of the Wars* were published in 550–51, and the last one—the eighth book—in 553 or 554.[15] Although Jordanes does not quote Procopius's *History of the Wars* directly, both works—as Andrew Gillett aptly put it—"speak to each other, sometimes contradictorily, in a historiographic dialogue," and maybe "On Buildings" should be considered part of this dialogue.[16] What role did the legend about the origin of the Goths play in this historiographic debate? Was it part of Jordanes's argumentation, wanting to demonstrate that the Goths should not be driven out of the lands recovered by the empire, and that any 'return' to their ancestral home was simply impossible? While it is sometimes argued that the origin legend of Goths and the story of their journey from Scandza to the shores of the Black Sea narrates events that actually occurred in the history of this people, I would like to treat it primarily as a narrative which communicates a certain ideological meaning and I wish to analyse it as such.

1 Scandza—Location

In the first section of his work, Jordanes devotes some space to two northern islands, Britain (*Brittania*) and Scandza. The description of the two islands was no accident. They both bear a close relationship to the issue of the origin of the Goths that the author traces in his book. Jordanes mentions an "old wives' tale" (fabula anilis) about the Goths having been slaves in Britain or some other island whence they were bought out of slavery for the price of one jade.[17] However, he did not give credence to this story, because there was no written record to corroborate it. The story of the migration from Scandza to the shores of the

14 See Goffart, *The Narrators*, pp. 97–105; Massimiliano Vitiello, *Amalasuintha: The Transformation of Queenship in the Post-Roman World* (Philadelphia, 2017), pp. 36 and 227 with note 81.

15 See Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (Berkeley, 1985), p. xii; Anthony Kaldellis, *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity* (Philadelphia, 2004), p. 3; Conor Whately, *Battles and Generals: Combat, Culture, and Didacticism in Procopius' Wars*, History of Warfare 111 (Leiden 2016), p. 62.

16 Andrew Gillett, "The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now," *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, ed. Philip Rousseau (Oxford, 2009), pp. 392–408, at 406. On a part of "De aedificiis" as a possible response to Jordanes's *Getica*, see Robert Kasperski, "Jordanes versus Procopius of Caesarea: Considerations concerning a Certain Historiographical Debate on 'How to Solve the Problem of the Goths,'" *Viator* 49, no. 1 (2018), 1–23, at pp. 16–20.

17 Jordanes, *Getica*, 38, p. 64; see also Peter Heather, *The Goths*, The Peoples of Europe (Oxford, 1996), pp. 28–29.

Pontic Sea, however, was allegedly confirmed both by Gothic ancient songs ("carmina prisca") and by the work of a historian of the Goths whose identity is not known to us, a certain Ablabius, who purportedly testified that it was "the most trustworthy account" (verissima historia).[18] The two sources, according to Jordanes, proved that the story he related is factual. Not only did the Goths come from Scandza, but the homeland of another people, the Heruls, was also thought to be located on this island, whence they were driven out by the Danes.[19] As for the Heruls, Procopius presents a radically different version of events. After their defeat at the hands of the Lombards, a group of the Heruls travelled north from their ancestral homeland (located north of the Danube) and settled on the island of Thule, first peacefully passing through the territory of the Danes "without suffering violence at the hands of the barbarians there."[20] As Goffart rightly stated,

> [i]t is hard to conceive that these coincidences between Procopius and Jordanes could have come about by chance or as slightly divergent interpretations of the same core of information. The very fact that Jordanes casts the opening of the Getica as an argument acquires its point when Procopius is found to feature almost the same names and incidents while stringing them together in a diametrically opposite direction.[21]

Indeed, according to Jordanes, the Heruls came from the North, while according to Procopius, the Heruls travelled to the North from their ancestral home along the Danube.

This is not the only fundamental difference between the two authors. What Procopius writes about the location of Thule is that it lies on the farthest edges of the northern Ocean, adding "as far as people know,"[22] and elsewhere reports that this island is located north of Britain.[23] Jordanes also refers to Thule, though he does not rely on the information of the rather vague 'knowledge of the people,' but instead tries to cite the excerpts of written sources that could substantiate his information about this island. When describing the ocean surrounding the world, he situates the island of Thule in its farthest,

18 Jordanes, *Getica*, 28, p. 61.
19 Ibid., 23, p. 59.
20 Procopius, *Wars*, 6.15.3, pp. 414–15.
21 Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 95.
22 Procopius, *Wars*, 8.20.6, p. 252.
23 Ibid., 6.15.5, p. 414: "Now Thule is exceedingly large; for it is more than ten times greater than Britain. And it lies far distant from it toward the north."

westernmost part.[24] Jordanes then recalls Virgil's words written in his *Georgica* (1.30): "Farthest Thule shall serve you" (Tibi serviat ultima Thule), which confirm that Thule is the farthest of all islands.[25] Taking this information into account, it must be concluded that if Procopius places Thule in the far north, Jordanes locates it in the far west. However, the northernmost site also appears in *Getica*. When it comes to the location of Scandza, Jordanes writes that there is a large island in the arctic, i.e. the northern part of the ocean, which is Scandza.[26] In one of the later passages referring to the account of the Alexandrian geographer, Ptolemy (d. *c.*170 C.E.), he identifies this island in the following way: "There is a great island situated in the surge of the northern Ocean, Scandza by name" (est in Oceani arctoi salo posita insula magna, nomine Scandza).[27] Consequently, it follows that where Procopius places Thule, Jordanes places Scandza.

The migration of the Heruls from their native abodes to Thule, on the edge of the northern Ocean, is essentially the barbarians' departure to the "very extremity of the world."[28] And Jordanes, as we may surmise, demonstrated that the Goths, the Gepids, and the Heruls came from this "extremity of the world," though not from Thule, but from Scandza.

The northern Scandza, separated from the rest of the world by an ocean, which in the tradition of ancient geographic literature constituted the border between order and chaos, was reckoned to be the "world upside-down," which was the exact opposite of the Greco-Roman *orbis*, constituting the *antichthon*.[29] It was located at the edge of the world—in the lands beyond "Greco-Roman knowledge," traditionally considered alien, wild, and dangerous.[30]

2 Scandza—Ethnographical Description

Procopius claimed that 13 very numerous peoples inhabited Thule, but only one of them—the *Scritiphini*—lived like wild animals. The other populations of Thule were not very different from other people.[31] In the *Getica* by Jordanes,

24 Jordanes, *Getica*, 8–9, p. 55.
25 Translation: Mierow, *The Gothic History*, p. 53.
26 Jordanes, *Getica*, 9, p. 55.
27 Ibid., 16, p. 58. Translation: Mierow, *The Gothic History*, p. 55.
28 Procopius, *Wars*, 6.15.1, pp. 414–15.
29 James S. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction* (Princeton, 1992), p. 25; Gillett, "The Mirror," p. 405.
30 Gillett, "The Mirror," p. 402.
31 Procopius, *Wars*, 6.15.16, p. 418.

the same people, which he calls the *Screrefennae*, resided in Scandza.[32] They were extremely primitive but were not the only inhabitants of the island who resembled wild beasts. When mentioning the peoples *Mixi*, *Evagre*, and *Otingis*, Jordanes writes that—similarly to wild beasts ("ritu beluino")—they dwelled in hewn-out rocks resembling castles.[33] Elsewhere, he states that all peoples of Scandza, larger than Germans in body and spirit, fought with the "cruelty of beasts" (beluina saevitia).[34] In this respect, all the tribes of the island resembled wild animals. The *topos* of the cave-dwellers sufficiently persuaded readers of *Getica* that the peoples inhabiting Scandza were enormously primitive. On the other hand, the *topos* of the northern barbarians fighting with the ferocity of wild beasts evinced that the far North was populated by the most ferocious of the savage tribes, who surpassed even the Germans in spirit and body size, and Germans were identified, in 6th-century Constantinople, with the barbarian Franks.[35] In ancient ethnographical works the Germans, of course, were presented as savage barbarians characterized by large body size, and even an author later than Jordanes, Isidore of Seville (d. 636), claimed that "the Germanic nations are so called because they are immense in body, and they are savage tribes hardened by very severe cold."[36]

Getica's narrative shows that the inhabitants of Scandza fought for fertile lands: peoples with names which sounded exotic to the residents of Constantinople, named the *Theustes*, *Vagoth*, *Bergio*, *Hallin*, *Liothida* lived in a flat and fertile region, which subjected them to attacks from neighbouring tribes.[37] Some tribes pushed others out: for example, the Danes expelled the Heruls from their settlements. Jordanes's goal, it seems, was to demonstrate that there was not enough good land in Scandza—or free space in general—for the groups currently living there, let alone for potential newcomers from the south. In this respect, Jordanes treats the North differently than Procopius does. The latter, relating that the Heruls arrived at Thule and settled in the vicinity of the Gauti, the most numerous of the populations dwelling on this island (which implies that they must have occupied a large area), proves something completely different than Jordanes, that there was ample room for

32 Jordanes, *Getica*, 21, p. 59.

33 Ibid., 22, p. 59.

34 Ibid., 24, p. 60.

35 For this identification, see Procopius, *Wars,* 5.12.8, pp. 118–19; Agathias, *Historiae*, 1.2.1, p. 16; Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 187.

36 *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 9.2.97, trans. Stephen Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge, 2006), p. 197; see also Robert Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination: Ethnicity, Legend, and Literature* (New York, 2015), p. 36.

37 Jordanes, *Getica*, 22, p. 59; Kasperski, "Jordanes," p. 9.

newcomers there. By the same token, the author of *Getica* poses the first argument against the widely endorsed theory about the return of the barbarians to their place of origin in *Barbaricum*. Simply put, the Goths had nowhere to return to. Goffart discerns a similar idea in Jordanes's narrative of Scythia. It was a land full of various peoples, inhabited by, for example, the Sclaveni and the Bulgars; hence, there was no place for Goths in it.[38]

Scandza, described as a "vagina gentium" ("vagina" or "scabbard of tribes") and an "officina nationum" (factory of peoples) was, in Jordanes's view, an island that gave birth to and exported people. The *topos* of the northern islands, exporting their surplus populations to the south, was popular in ancient historiography. It was also used by Procopius, who claimed that three tribes lived on the northern island of Brittia—the Angles, the Frisians, and the Britons—whose population was so numerous that every year they emigrated to the territory of the Franks, and were settled by them in the sparsely inhabited parts of their country.[39] Jordanes, however, went even further in his discussion: it was not so much the excess populations of Scandza who emigrated from the island, but in fact there were exoduses of entire peoples. One such group were the Goths, who, according to this author, left it "long ago" led by a King Berig, which was also ostensibly remembered in ancient Gothic songs that were meant to be almost historical ("pene storico ritu").[40]

Although Jordanes does not give a direct reason for the departure of the Goths from Scandza, it seems that he wanted to communicate to his readers that this land was not worth inhabiting. Two pieces of information speak for such an interpretation. First, Jordanes, when describing the remarkable phenomenon of wolves going blind after finding their way to the islands adjacent to Scandza, adds that "thus the land is not only inhospitable to men but cruel even to wild beasts" (ita non solum inhospitalis hominibus, verum etiam beluis terra crudelis est).[41] Second, when mentioning a people called the *Grannii*, *Augandzi*, *Eunixi*, *Taetel*, *Rugi*, *Aroch*, and *Ranii*, ruled by a certain Rodulf, he adds that the king despised his own kingdom and went to the court of Theodoric the Great to find there what he desired.[42] The implication here is that even royal power exercised over a kingdom in Scandza was not actually worth much.

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38 Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 93; cf. Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554*, Cambridge Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 291–307.

39 Procopius, *Wars*, 8.20.8, pp. 254–55.

40 Jordanes, *Getica*, 28, p. 61.

41 Ibid., 18, p. 58. Translation: Mierow, *The Gothic History*, p. 55.

42 Jordanes, *Getica*, 24, p. 60.

3 Gothic Migration and Its Irreversibility

According to Jordanes, the Goths left Scandza once upon a time like a swarm of bees.[43] The bees—as Gillett showed—act as a rhetorical figure called an ellipsis, which was designed to convince the readers about the "permanency of the Gothic departure from their original clime."[44] Under the leadership of Berig, on three ships—the number symbolizing the three 'Gothic peoples' found in *Getica*, i.e. the Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, and the Gepids—they crossed the sea and named the land where they set foot Gothiscandza.[45] Afterwards, they overcame the Ulmerugians, and then subdued the Vandals. After some time, when the population of the Goths had increased, Filimer, approximately the fifth king after Berig, began a new migration. The Goths reached the borders of Scythia, which they called *Oium* in their tongue, a land which delighted them with its fertility.

Further on in the *Getica*, we read about the three abodes where the Goths were believed to have consecutively settled: Scythia near Maeotian Lake, where they were ruled by the aforementioned Filimer; then Thrace, Moesia, and Dacia, where they were ruled by Zalmoxis and then by the sages Zeuta and Diceneus; and finally Scythia again, this time above the Pontic Sea, where they were thought to have divided into two peoples—the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths.[46]

Let's return for a moment to the first settlement, which—as Jordanes emphasizes—was called *Oium* in the language of the Goths.[47] To reach it, the Goths had to cross a bridge over the border river. When half of the Gothic army had passed to the other side, the bridge collapsed into an irreparable ruin, so the other half could not travel to or fro. These 'stay-behind' Goths got stuck 'forever' somewhere between Gothiscandza and *Oium*. The ruined bridge symbolizes the irreversibility of Gothic migration: an ellipsis representing the Goths as bees can perform a similar function.[48] Moreover, the image of half of

43 Ibid., 25, p. 60.

44 See Andrew Gillett, "The Goths and the Bees in Jordanes: A Narrative of No Return," in *Byzantine Narrative: Papers in Honour of Roger Scott*, ed. John Burk, Ursula Betka, Penelope Buckley, Kathleen Hay, Roger Scott, and Andrew Stephenson (Melbourne, 2006), pp. 149–63, at 159.

45 Jordanes, *Getica*, 25, p. 60.

46 Ibid., 38–39, pp. 63–64.

47 Ibid., 27, p. 60.

48 Gillett, "The Goths," p. 158; A.H. Merrills, *History and Geography in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series (Cambridge, 2005), p. 148.

the Gothic army forced to stay in this place, unable either to go forward or to return, also implies the inability to return to the Scandian *Urheimat*.

In Late Antiquity, it was believed that the place where a given people came from and which they once left is also a place to which they will eventually return.[49] The Goths could return to the land they once departed from, just like the other 'homecoming' peoples. However, the symbol of the broken bridge and the image of the 'stay-behind' Goths, who could neither move forward and enter *Oium*, nor go back to Gothiscandza, satisfactorily convinced the readers of Jordanes's *Getica* that such a return was simply impossible: the Goths abandoned forever the northern, wild world unknown to the Romans.

In the third book of his *History of the Wars* published in 550–51, Procopius describes the migration of another barbarian people who forcibly invaded the borders of the Roman empire: the Vandals.[50] During the reign of their king, Godigisel (d. 406), famine erupted in the ancient homeland of the Vandals. In another section of his work, Procopius places their homeland about the Maeotian Lake (the Sea of Azov).[51] Some Vandals, forced by hunger, left their homes under Godigisel. The rest remained in place. Over time, the famine crisis passed and the Vandals who remained in the former settlement began to again enjoy an abundance of food. During Gaiseric's reign these 'stay-behind' Vandals sent envoys to Africa. They rejoiced that their brethren managed to take over Libya, but they feared that the conquerors of that land or their descendants would be driven out of it and forced to return to their ancestral homes. Therefore, they sent a message to their 'African kin' asking them to renounce their title to the land they had once abandoned. Gaiseric was in the act of granting the envoy's request when an old man, esteemed for his wisdom, took the floor. He reminded his kinsmen of the changeability of affairs and things, adding that in the future that which does not yet exist can come to pass. Gaiseric agreed with his opinion and the envoys of the 'stay-behind' Vandals went empty handed. Procopius adds that no name or remembrance of those Vandals who stayed in their ancient homeland had been preserved to his time. In his opinion, they were conquered by other barbarians or they voluntarily mingled with them, adopting their tribal name. When the African Vandals were defeated by Belisarius, it did not even occur to them to return to their former homeland.

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49 See Walter Goffart, "Does the Distant Past Impinge on the Invasion Age Germans?," in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillett (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 21–37, at 24.

50 Procopius, *Wars*, 3.3.1–36, pp. 22–35.

51 Ibid., 3.3.1, pp. 22–23.

We can present the differences between Jordanes's account of the Gothic journey and Procopius's story about the migration of the Vandals in the following Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1 A comparision between the account of the migration of the Goths, according to Jordanes, and that of the Vandals, according to Procopius

The Goths	The Vandals
The first of the three settlements (*Oium*) occupied by the Goths—after emigrating from Gothiscandza—was located in Scythia near the Sea of Azov.	The homeland of this people was located on the Sea of Azov.
A group of this people got stuck on the border between Gothiscandza and *Oium*.	Some of the Vandals remained in their ancient homeland.
The descendants of this faction survived "until today," that is, until *Getica* was written.	The descendants of this faction did not survive until the writing of *History of the Wars*.

Although Procopius asserts that the Vandals did not eventually return to their ancestral homeland, he implies that such a return was theoretically possible. Moreover, his story shows that the African Vandals were the only ones who had the rights to their former seat, because they did not cede them to their now non-existent brethren. Of course, the account of the ancient homeland of the Vandals, lying on the Sea of Azov, has nothing to do with the past reality: this people never inhabited these areas. This story was constructed by Procopius for a specific purpose. With its help, he tried to convince his audience that not only could the barbarians return to their former homelands, but that they also had a place to return to. Jordanes, on the other hand, in his tale of the Gothic migration, indicated that such a return was simply impossible.

4 A Story of the Goths Becoming Civilized?

Jordanes writes that the Goths did not lack those who taught them wisdom. Therefore, out of almost all barbarians, the Goths have always been the wisest, almost equalling the Greeks.[52] These 'teachers of wisdom' included Zalmoxis,

52 Jordanes, *Getica*, 40, p. 64.

Zeuta, and Diceneus. In the third of the three settlements, when they became more prudent (*prudentiores*) and civilized (*humaniores*), they divided according to royal families into two peoples: the Visigoths served the Balts, while the famous lineage of the Amali ruled over the Ostrogoths.[53] In later chapters of the narrative, Jordanes once more presents the achievements of Diceneus, who contributed greatly to the transformation of the Goths from savage barbarians into a people so intelligent that they nearly rivalled the Greeks. Diceneus was to notice that their minds were obedient to him in everything, and therefore began the great process of the civilizational transformation of the Goths which took place in the second of the three settlements.[54] The marvellous success of this wise man was to restrain the barbaric customs of the Goths and to make them live in accordance with their own laws, called *belaginesi*, which for *Getica*'s readers was a telltale sign that the Goths ceased to be barbaric savages from that moment.[55] It was generally thought that barbarians did not have laws and were unable to live under the law.[56] Antique works recurrently express the idea that the transition from wildness to civilization ended when people received laws.[57] Jordanes showed that the Goths had laws, so they were no longer barbaric savages. Moreover, Diceneus had yet another way of transforming the Goths into a people that could not be considered uncivilized and barbaric. According to Jordanes, Dicineus was to teach "them logic and made them skilled in reasoning beyond all other peoples" (logicam instruens rationis eos supra ceteras gentes fecie expertes).[58]

At this point we should stop and devote some attention to an issue known from ancient ethnographic works, namely the antithesis between barbarism/savagery and civilization/humanity. This antithesis can also be seen in the works of Procopius.[59] The Goths were ordinary barbarians for him, although in *History of the Wars* he displayed a fondness for their rulers, Theodoric the Great and Totila, to whom he attributed the characteristics of civilized monarchs.[60]

53 Ibid., 42, p. 64.

54 Ibid., 69, p. 74.

55 See ibid., 69, p. 74. Jordanes writes that Dicineus "restrained their barbaric customs" (barbaricos mores conpescuit).

56 See Patrick Wormald, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999), pp. 27–28.

57 See Kasperski, "Jordanes," p. 16.

58 Jordanes, *Getica*, 69, p. 74. Translation: Mierow, *The Gothic History*, p. 70 (with minor changes).

59 See Cameron, *Procopius*, p. 239; E.A. Thompson, "The Byzantine Conquest of Italy: Public Opinion," in idem, *Romans & Barbarians: The Decline of the Western Empire* (Madison, 1982), pp. 92–109, at 109.

60 See Michael E. Stewart, "Contests of Andreia in Procopius' Gothic Wars," *Parekbolai* 4 (2014), 21–54.

This peculiar inconsistency in perceiving the enemies of the empire is particularly evident in Book VIII. As Averil Cameron argues,

> [a]s the Wars progressed, Procopius did have some difficulty with his over-simple idea of barbarians, and in book VIII there is a new and deliberate sympathy for the Gothic cause under the leadership of Totila. For a short time, the roles assigned to barbarians and Romans by Procopius were reversed. But by and large the opposition "barbarian/civilised" holds good.[61]

The uncivilized and barbaric nature of the Goths is often revealed in his narrative. So, for example, when the daughter of Theodoric the Great, Queen Amalasuntha (d. 535), wanted to raise her son Athalaric (r. 526–34) to follow a manner of life similar to the Roman rulers', the Goths showed their disapproval.[62] Because they wanted to do harm to their Roman subjects, they also wanted to be ruled by him in a barbarian way. In this tale, the *topos* of the barbarians is revealed in all its glory: barbarians who were not only enemies of civilization and the *Romanitas*, but also merciless enemies of the Romans themselves.[63] This was not the only way which Procopius used to exemplify that the Goths were a barbarian and uncivilized people *par excellence*. As typical barbarians, they were unable to besiege cities.[64] One description in the *History of the Wars* particularly illustrates this fact. Procopius, describing the siege of Rome in 537, reports that the Goths built powerful siege towers and rams which were pulled by oxen.[65] Yet, it was enough for Belisarius to give the order to his archers to shoot these animals, and the Goths could not haul their machines any further and could not devise another plan. Belisarius even burst out laughing at the sight of the towers pulled by oxen, and, as Procopius comments, the Roman general chuckled at the simplicity of the barbarians who imprudently expected to bring these animals up to the enemy's wall.[66]

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61 Averil Cameron, "History as Text: Coping with Procopius," in *The Inheritance of Historiography 350–900*, ed. Christopher Holdsworth and T.P. Wiseman (Exeter, 1986), pp. 53–66, at 61.

62 Procopius, *Wars*, 5.2.1–8, pp. 14–17.

63 Prokopiusz z Cezarei, *Historia Wojen*, vol. 2, *Wojny z Gotami*, trans. Dariusz Brodka (Kraków, 2015), p. 17.

64 See Guy Halsall, *Warfare and Society in the Barbarian West, 450–900*, Warfare and History (London, 2003), p. 224.

65 Procopius, *Wars*, 5.22.1–11, pp. 208–11.

66 Ibid., 5.22.9, pp. 210–11.

The uncivilized character of the Goths, which Procopius paints in his works, is also visible in "On Buildings": a certain group of them could not live within walls at all, which showed his readers that, overall, the Goths were by their very nature an uncivilized and barbaric people who simply could not live within the civilized world.[67] All these qualities—wildness, mindlessness, and the inability to live within cities—clearly demonstrated the uncivilized character of the Goths to Procopius's readers. Of course, Jordanes also made a distinction between barbarians and civilized peoples, but he differed from Procopius in that he subsumed the Goths to the latter category. In his works, Procopius tried—as Goffart accurately said—"to underscore the foreignness of the barbarians in question, and the impropriety of their living on Roman soil."[68]

The theme of the Goths becoming civilized during their migration, which we find in *Getica*, obviously has an ideological significance. In general, the Greeks and the Romans held the belief that barbarians were mindless, uncouth wild beasts or savages closer to animals rather than humans.[69] Barbarians were thought to be unable to think and reason because they were irrational creatures who were driven by unsatisfied desires.[70] They were usually portrayed as exceptionally brave, but devoid of mental virtues such as *sapientia* or *prudentia*. Thus, for example, when Agathias of Myrina describes the nature of the Herul general, Fulcaris, he essentially depicts a stereotypical non-Roman leader who, although tremendously courageous, is a barbarian devoid of prudence.[71] Interestingly, when the propagandists of Theodoric the Great were constructing the ethnographic identity of the Italian Ostrogoths, they formulated a view that these people inherited the courage or manliness (*virtus*) of the peoples (*gentes*—of course, in this case it means the 'barbarian peoples') and acquired the wisdom (*prudentia*) of the Romans, thus demonstrating that the Gothic warriors were no uncivilized barbarians.[72] Although they were brave like the barbarians, they were also prudent like the Romans, which placed the Goths

67 See Kasperski, "Jordanes," pp. 16–20.

68 Goffart, *Barbarian Tides*, p. 308 n. 144.

69 See Wolfram, *Die Goten*, p. 18.

70 Ibid., p. 18; Peter Heather, "The Barbarian in Late Antiquity: Image, Reality, and Transformation," in *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, ed. Richard Miles, Routledge Classical Monographs (London, 1999), pp. 234–58, at 236.

71 Agathias, *The Histories*, 1.14.3, p. 22.

72 Cassiodorus, *Variae epistolae*, 3.23.3, ed. Theodor Mommsen, Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores antiquissimi 12 (Berlin, 1894), p. 91; cf. ibid., 11.13.4, p. 428 where the Ostrogothic King Theodahad (r. 534–36) is presented as a great ruler who was "Romanis prudentia carum, gentibus virtute reverendum." On Theoderic's ethnographic ideology see Amory, *People and Identity*, pp. 43–85.

even higher than the latter. After all, it was claimed in Late Antiquity that the Romans lost their bravery.[73] In some passages, Procopius accused the Goths of lacking reason, as we have shown. Jordanes presented them in a different way: by claiming that the Goths were rational, he most likely wanted to signal that their nature was not suited to the world from which they came and which, as he argued, they irreversibly left.

The idea that the Goths were not savage and barbaric could have been used as a strong argument in the debate taking place in Constantinople. If the proponents of expelling all barbarians out of the Roman empire claimed that the Goths, by their very nature, belonged to the barbarian world, then Jordanes—and perhaps the political circles behind him—maintained that Goths were closer to the Greeks, in terms of civilization, than to the inhabitants of the wild world that lay outside the borders of the *orbis Romanus*.

In "On Buildings," Procopius conveys the idea that the emperor Justinian was in reality the "founder of the civilised world."[74] If Procopius claimed that the Gothic barbarians did not belong to this world and were essentially a "foreign body" in his territory, then Jordanes implied that nothing stood in the way of letting them stay within the Roman empire. Although they came from the farthest North, from the mysterious island of Scandza, they achieved *prudentia* and *humanitas*, and in fact the Goths did not differ much from the Greeks when it came to civilizational development.

Looking at all the threads and *topoi* that appear on the pages of Jordanes's work discussed here, it can be concluded that the origin legend of the Goths, which began with their departure from Scandza, demonstrated to his readers that this people had little in common with the savage and animalized peoples inhabiting the northern island, except that they once dwelled there together. In the course of the migration, thanks to such sages as Zalmoxis and Diceneus, the Goths became nearly like the Greeks with regard to culture and civilization. Hence, the recipients of the *Getica* may have drawn the conclusion, one perhaps welcomed by Jordanes, that the world to which the Goths belonged was not their wild, northern homeland, where the land is inhospitable not only to people, but even for wild beasts; but it was rather the civilized world: the Roman empire.

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73 See e.g. Zosimus, *New History*, 5.41, trans. Ronald T. Ridley (Canberra, 1982), p. 121; Walter Emil Kaegi, *Byzantium and the Decline of the Roman Empire* (Princeton, 1968), p. 130.

74 Procopius, *De aedificiis*, 4.1.17, p. 225; Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region c. 500–700*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought: Fourth Series (Cambridge, 2001), p. 152.

An expert on Procopius's works, Averil Cameron, wrote:

> there are some themes that can with justice be said to pervade his work as a whole. Mostly they have to do with preserving the established order, and for Procopius the established order includes a strong demarcation between civilized people and barbarians.[75]

Jordanes compared the Goths to the Greeks, often pointing to the advanced civilizational development of the former. The question is why. In his discussion on the role of *Getica* in the debate on the "barbarian final solution," Goffart argues that Jordanes's purpose was to promote the integration of the Goths into the population of the Roman empire.[76] Perhaps, as Goffart suggests, the aim of Jordanes was to convince his readers that the Goths and the Romans could create a new community in Italy, the announcement of which was the birth of a child with mixed Gothic–Roman blood that the granddaughter of Theodoric the Great, Mathasunta, had with Justinian's cousin, Germanus.[77] Not only the birth of this child can be seen as a symbolic union of Goths and Romans. The very marriage of Germanus and Mathasunta can be seen as such. This conclusion seems to be supported by Jordanes's account of the wedding of the Visigothic king Athaulf and Galla Placidia, as the historian deems this marriage to be a union of the Goths with the Romans: "When the barbarians learned of this alliance, they were the more effectually terrified, since the Empire and the Goths now seemed to be made one."[78]

Jordanes showed in *Getica* that the Goths could not return to their original northern homeland, but also that they were no longer effectively a barbaric people. Therefore, nothing prevented the Goths and Romans from building a new community in Italy. Interestingly, the earlier author, Victor of Vita in his work "History of the Vandal Persecution," as demonstrated by Peter Heather, created two opposing categories: Roman = civilized and Vandal = barbarian.[79] Victor's goal was to provide evidence that "the two groups can never intersect or mingle."[80] He intended to prove to his readers that civilized Romans and barbarian Vandals were utterly dissimilar. In the case of Jordanes, the strategy could have been to show that the Goths—like the Romans—were civilized men and, therefore, could easily blend in with the population of the Roman empire.

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75 Cameron, *Procopius*, p. 239.

76 Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 96.

77 Ibid., pp. 72, 96, 109.

78 Translation: Mierow, *The Gothic History*, p. 95; Jordanes, *Getica*, 160, pp. 99–100: "ut gentes hac societate conperta quasi adunatum Gothic rem publicam efficacius terrerentur."

79 Heather, "The Barbarian," p. 245.

80 Ibid., p. 248.

We have already mentioned the restraining of the barbaric customs of the Goths which allegedly took place thanks to Diceneus's work. At this point, it is worth quoting two more passages that come from the works of Agathias and Procopius. The first one, a continuator of Procopius's *Wars*, describes the last phase of Justinian's war with the Italian Goths. He states that Gothic resistance ended when their most important leader (after the death of King Teia), Aligern, decided to join the Roman empire. Describing his actions, Agathias reports that he decided to "join the Roman res publica (πολιτεία) and to discard his present state of danger along with his barbarian customs."[81] Agathias then comments on Aligern's decision as follows: "[h]e set an example of good judgement for the rest of his people."[82] In the first of the quoted sentences, the phrase βαρβαρικὰ διαιτήματα is used, whose meaning is not entirely clear. If it does indeed mean "barbarian customs" or rather "a barbarian way of life" and the wording has ethnic rather than political overtones, then perhaps for the Eastern Roman historian joining a Roman state and submitting to the emperor's power entailed a simultaneous rejection of the barbarian way of living. Let me now quote an excerpt from Procopius's work, which recounts the content of the letter which Justinian sent to Gothic aristocrats in 536. Its most important content is:

> It has been the object of our concern to receive you back into our republic, a prospect that should reasonably please you. For you would come to us not in order to be diminished but to be more honored. Besides, we are not inviting the Goths to enter into strange or alien customs but those of a people with whom you were once familiar, although you have by chance been separated from them for a while.[83]

Here, in turn, it is said that the Goths joining the Roman state will be tantamount to adopting Roman customs. In consequence, based on these two accounts, can we venture to claim that the integration of the Goths into the Roman empire was understood as abandoning their barbaric ways and embracing Roman/civilized customs? If that were the case, it would be necessary to consider whether Jordanes's mention of Diceneus's restraint of the savage customs of the Goths was not a distinct signal for *Getica*'s readers that in the past this people had cast off their "barbarian way of life" and for this reason it could

81 Agathias, *Historiae*, 1.20.3, p. 56; I have adapted the translation by Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), p. 126; cf. Agathias, *The Histories*, 1.20.3, trans. J.D. Frendo, p. 28.

82 Kaldellis, *Romanland*, p. 126.

83 I have adapted the translation by A. Kaldellis, idem, Prokopios, *The Wars of Justinian*, 5.7.23–25, p. 267.

easily become a part of the state ruled by the one who defeated them, Justinian, for whose glory, moreover, Jordanes, as he proclaims, wrote his work.[84]

Rosamond McKitterick once wrote that

> the writing of history was not simply a matter of keeping a record for posterity. It was also an effort to make the past comprehensible and relate it in some way to the present, whether as support for contemporary political ideology or to explain God's purpose.[85]

Based on Jordanes's narrative, one can infer that *Getica* may also have served as a tool to back the contemporary political ideology of those circles which sought to convince the Roman public that the Goths belonged to the Roman world. Or maybe we should venture another hypothesis: that *Getica* were intended to persuade some royal court circles to dissuade Emperor Justinian from his idea of expelling the "name of the Goths" outside the borders of the empire?[86] *Getica* contains a panegyric in honour of Emperor Justinian.[87] Should we, then, conclude that the intended recipient of the work was in fact the royal court circles or the emperor himself? Let us leave this issue outside of these considerations, as it requires a separate discussion.[88]

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84 Jordanes, *Getica*, 316, p. 138.

85 Rosamond McKitterick, "The Audience for Latin Historiography in the Early Middle Ages: Text Transmission and Manuscript Dissemination," in *Historiographie in frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 96–114, at 97.

86 Cf. Goffart, *The Narrators*, p. 106. Brian Croke argues that Jordanes "was writing at the time when the emperor was committing his army to an all-out assault on the Goths," idem, "Latin Historiography and the Barbarian Kingdoms," in *Greek and Latin Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.*, ed. Gabriele Marasco (Leiden 2003), pp. 349–89, at p. 373.

87 Jordanes, *Getica*, 316, p. 138; Merrills, *History and Geography*, p. 166.

88 This paper is dedicated to the memory of Professor Frank M. Clover (1940–2019). I am most grateful to Marco Cristini (PhD candidate of the Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa) for his generous help on philological matters.

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CHAPTER 7

The Early History of Frankish Origin Legends, *c.*500–800 C.E.

Helmut Reimitz

The early medieval Franks have long been seen as the true successors of the ancient Germans. Already late Roman and early Byzantine writers identified them as the new *Germani*.[1] This identification has been taken up with great enthusiasm by national historiography in the 19th and 20th century in its longing to (re-)construct Germanic continuities from Antiquity to the Middle Ages and beyond.[2] Such continuities, however, seem to have interested people in the early medieval kingdom of the Franks much less than some modern scholars. The oldest extant legend on the origins of the Franks, which has come down to us in a 7th-century chronicle, links the beginnings of Frankish history to the prestigious history of the Trojan heroes and deliberately chooses to build upon the rich and prestigious reservoir of Roman myth and history to construct Frankish origins in analogy to Roman ones.[3]

1 E.g. Jerome, *Vita Hilarionis*, c. 13, ed. A.A.R. Bastiaensen, *Vita dei Santi del III al VI secolo*, vol. 4 (Rome, 1975), p. 102; Procopius, *Wars*, 5.12.7, ed. H.B. Dewing, Loeb Classical Library, 7 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1914–40), 3:119; for Byzantium see also Eugen Ewig, "Die Franken und Rom (3.-5- Jahrhundert). Versuch einer Übersicht," in *Spätantikes und fränkisches Gallien*, vol. 3, ed. Eugen Ewig (Ostfildern, 2009), pp. 121–62, p. 140; pp. 151–52.

2 Ian N. Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2012); Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002); Walter Pohl, "Der Germanenbegriff vom 3. bis zum 8. Jahrhundert – Identifikationen und Abgrenzungen," in *Zur Geschichte der Gleichung "germanisch – deutsch": Sprache und Namen, Geschichte und Institutionen*, ed. Heinrich Beck, Dieter Geuenich, Heiko Steuer, and Dietrich Hakelberg (Berlin, 2004), pp. 163–83.

3 For recent discussions of origin legends including the Frankish narratives in the early Middle Ages, see Walter Pohl, "Narratives of Origin and Migration in Early Medieval Europe: Problems of Interpretation," *Narratives of Ethnic and Tribal Origins: A Eurasian Perspective*, ed. Walter Pohl and Daniel Mahoney, special issue, *The Medieval History Journal* 21, no. 2 (2018), 192–221; Shami Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past: Studies in Early Medieval Historical Narrative* (Leiden, 2015); Magali Coumert, *Origines des peoples: Les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental* (Paris, 2007); Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identität und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen*, Orbis mediaevalis. Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 7 (Berlin, 2006); Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks. Frankish Origins in Early

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The account is even presented as deriving from Roman literary and historical authorities, namely the poet Virgil and the Christian church father Jerome:

> Concerning the kings of the Franks, and who they once were, blessed Jerome has written what before him the poet Virgil had reported, that they had Priam as their first king. When Ulysses took Troy by deceit they departed from there. Afterward they had Frigas as king. Divided into two, part of them went to Macedonia. The others under Friga were called Frigians; they wandered about Asia and settled on the shore of the Danube and the sea of the Ocean. Again, there was a division into two, and one part of them under their king Francio entered Europe. Wandering about Europe, they settled along with their wives and children on the bank of the river Rhine. And they sought to build a city named after Troy, not far from the Rhine. This work was begun but left unfinished. The other part of them that stayed on the bank of the river Danube elected a king, Torcoth, and were called Turchi after him. The others are called Franci after Francio. For a long time afterwards, they were led by dukes and rejected to be ruled by any foreign power; and this is how they lived until the time of their dukes Marcomer, Sunno and Gennobaudes.[4]

This report has come down to us in an anonymous chronicle whose oldest extant redaction was compiled in the 660s. It received its name—the *Chronicle of Fredegar*—only in the early modern period.[5] However, it does not present us

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Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s. 14 (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47–57; Eugen Ewig, "Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte," in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht von Zülpich"* (*496/97*), ed. Dieter Geuenich, RGA, suppl. vol. 19 (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1–30; Hans-Hubert Anton, "Origo gentis. Die Franken," in *RGA*, 2nd ed., vol. 22 (Berlin, 2003), pp. 189–95, with an overview over the older literature.

4 Fredegar, *Chronicle*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888), p. 93; for an English translation, see Alexander C. Murray, *From Roman to Merovingian Gaul* (Toronto, 2008), p. 592.

5 On the chronicle see Ian N. Wood, "Fredegar's Fables," in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für österreichische Geschichtsforschung 32 (Vienna, 1994), pp. 359–66; Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, MGH Studien und Texte 44 (Hanover, 2007); Andreas Fischer, "Rewriting History: Fredegar's Perspective on the Mediterranean," in *Western Perspectives on the Mediterranean: Cultural Transfer in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages, 400–800 AD*, ed. Andreas Fischer and Ian N. Wood (London, 2014), pp. 55–76; Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 174–99;

with *the* origin story of the Franks, but rather one answer among others to a set of questions about the early history of the Franks.[6]

This becomes already clear by the positioning of the text in the chronicle as an insertion into their rewriting and rearrangement of older histories which the chroniclers used for recounting the history before the 7th century. The "chain of chronicles" starts with a version of the *Liber generationis* of Hippolytus of Rome which presents a comprehensive list of rulers, prophets, kings, popes, and not least the peoples of the world.[7] After the end of the *Liber generationis*, the compilers added a few lists and genealogies of their own, and continued their history with the *Chronicle* of Jerome, which they also comprehensively reworked. After the continuation of Jerome's *Chronicle* by Hydatius and a short section for which no source has been identified so far, follows the rewriting of the *Histories* of Gregory of Tours, ending with the death of Chilperic I in 584.[8] Then they added as a new book their own account from 584 to the 640s.

The origin legend of the Franks quoted above is inserted into the rewriting of Gregory of Tours's *Histories*, a section that is organized as its own book in the chronicle and explicitly entitled as an excerpt of Gregory's work—*quod est scarpsum de chronica Gregorii episcopi Toronaci*.[9] However, the chronicle's rewriting presented its readers with a text that was very different from

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and see the forthcoming study of Andreas Fischer, *Die Fredegar-Chronik: Komposition und Kontextualisierung* (forthcoming).

6 See now, the excellent overview of the form and function of origin legends in Pohl, "Narratives of Origin," including a comparison of the late-antique and early medieval legends with other examples from the Eurasian world that are also discussed in the same special issue. On origin narratives as responding to a set of questions rather than an established literary genre, see Herwig Wolfram, "Origo gentis. Allgemeines," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 2nd ed., vol. 22 (Berlin, 2003), pp. 174–78.

7 For the term "chain of chronicles," see Ian N. Wood, "The 'Chain of Chronicles' in London BL 16974," in *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift: Historiographie und Hagiographie im Spannungsfeld von Edition und Kompendienüberlieferung*, ed. Richard Corradini and Maximilian Diesenberger, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 15 (Vienna, 2010), pp. 67–78. On the writing and continuation of late-antique chronicles in general, Richard Burgess and Michael Kulikowski, *Mosaics of Time: The Latin Chronicle Traditions from the First Century BC to the Sixth Century AD*, vol. 1, *Historical Introduction to the Chronicle Genre from its Origins to the High Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2013); Rosamond McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, 2006); and now, Peter Van Nuffelen and Lieve Van Hoof, eds. *Clavis historicorum antiquitatis posterioris: An Inventory of Late Antique Historiography* (*AD 300–800*) (Turnhout, 2020), pp. IX–LXXX.

8 For a comprehensive study of the sources of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* see the forthcoming study of Fischer, *Fredegar-Chronik*.

9 Fredegar, *Chronicle*, 2, title, ed. Krusch, p. 89.

how Gregory wanted his *Histories* to be distributed.[10] Not only did they use a version of Gregory's *Histories* abbreviated into six instead of ten books. They also comprehensively reworked Gregory's text and literally turned Gregory's historical vision upside down to adapt it to the changed circumstances of their own times.[11]

As has been well observed and studied, part of this agenda was to highlight the role of the Franks and the meaning of Frankish identity in their history. And here the chroniclers clearly entered a debate with Gregory of Tours, who had presented the Franks as a rather incoherent social group among many in a kingdom whose main focus for political and social integration should not be Frankish identity but rather Gregory's vision of an orthodox Christianity.[12] Concerning the origins of the Franks, Gregory presents a much more-critical approach. At great length, he quotes a number of historians and historical authorities, such as Orosius, Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, and Sulpicius Alexander, to show that nothing conclusive can be said about the early history of the Franks and their kings, and starts this lengthy chapter with a summary of his argument:

> *De Francorum vero regibus*—Concerning the kings of the Franks and who their first king was is largely unknown. While Sulpicius Alexander tells us many things about the Franks, he does not give us in any way a name for their first king, but only says that they had dukes.[13]

Then he proceeds to illustrate this conclusion with long citations from older historical works. That extensive compilation results in what is by far the longest chapter of the second book, and it serves to underscore Gregory's point

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10 See Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 10.31, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH SS rerum Merovingicarum 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), pp. 535–36, who ended his history with a dramatic appeal to transmit the text intact and complete just as he had finished it. On this see also, Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century* (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 94–101; and with a different interpretation Helmut Reimitz, "The History of Merovingian Historiography," in *The Oxford History of the Merovingian World*, ed. Bonnie Effros and Isabel Moreira (Oxford, 2020), pp. 463–88.

11 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, part 2, chap. 2; Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 295–324; Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 147–73; see the forthcoming study of Fischer, *Die Fredegar-Chronik*.

12 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 25–50; Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, chap. 4; Walter Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History* (AD *550–800*)*: Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, 2005), pp. 112–234.

13 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 52.

that the question of the earliest Frankish kings cannot even be answered with the help of these *historici*. Gregory collects different passages which mention *Franci* as enemies or allies of the Romans, even as officers of the Roman army, but none of these mentions the names of the Franks' kings. Gregory begins the whole survey with the now lost history of Sulpicius Alexander, which provides a great deal of information on the Franks, and yet "it still does not name their first king, but rather says that they had *duces*."[14] However, it was worth relating what he said of them, comments Gregory. For when Sulpicius says that Maximus, losing all hope of acquiring the empire, remained in Aquileia, he adds, "At that time the Franks burst into the province of Germany under Genobaud, Marchomir and Sunno, their *duces*." Gregory surveyed other material from Sulpicius's history for selective excerpts and commentary. He found mention of Marchomir and Sunno again in Sulpicius's fourth book, this time as *regales*, but rather interpreted the title as indicating a position to hold the *regnum* in place of kings.[15] Gregory moves from Sulpicius to quote long passages from Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus (whom he had already used in an earlier chapter), and he ends with a quotation from Orosius. He then summarizes again the results of his research: "This is the information that the abovementioned historians have left us regarding the Franks, without naming their kings."[16] Eventually Gregory concludes the chapter with a short paragraph on what he had heard. Many claimed—"tradunt enim multi"—that the Franks had supposedly left Pannonia, crossed the Rhine, and then elected long-haired kings from their first and foremost family.[17] But these reports, which Gregory cites from oral sources, actually correlate strikingly well with his failed search for the earliest Frankish kings. To a certain extent, they provide an answer to the question of origins: only in Gaul did the Franks have kings for the first time. Only then could they be located in time and space. There were only isolated and discordant reports for the earlier period; for that time, the history of the Franks must remain unclear and uncertain.

To this conclusion the compiler of the *Fredegar Chronicle* responded directly in the rewriting of Gregory's text. The chapter starts with a word-for-word

14 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 52; on the lost histories quoted by Gregory see now Peter Van Nuffelen and Lieve Van Hoof, eds., *The Fragmentary Latin Histories of Late Antiquity* (*AD 300 – 620*)*: Edition, Translation and Commentary* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 81–138.

15 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 54: "Cum autem eos regales vocet, nescimus, utrum reges fuerint, an in vices tenuerunt regnum."

16 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 57.

17 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.9, ed. Krusch and Levison, p. 57.

quote from Gregory, but only to contradict it with the help of two other literary and historical authorities:

> *De Francorum vero regibus*—Concerning the Franks and who they once were, blessed Jerome has written what before him the poet Virgil had reported, that they had Priam as their first king.[18]

The argument with Gregory also explains why the chronicle invokes the authority of Jerome and Virgil in their rewriting of a text that they themselves presented as excerpts from Gregory's. One obviously needed prestigious sources other than Gregory to contradict the bishop of Tours, whose *Histories* had become so widely known that the chroniclers themselves did not want to write their chronicle without building on Gregory's historiographical authority.

In the book with the excerpts from Gregory, the chroniclers provided only a relatively short account. But they also refer the reader to a much longer presentation of a Frankish origin legend in their version of the *Chronicle* of Jerome which they had put before their rewriting of Gregory. Jerome had actually in no way included a longer account about the origins of the Franks. But the chroniclers clearly wanted to substantiate their history with their version of the Jerome chronicle, to which they added a comprehensive account stretching over several chapters at the beginning of their epitome:[19]

> Under Tautanas, king of the Assyrians, Troy was captured … [then comes a paragraph on the history of ancient Israel, HR] … At this time Priam abducted Helen. The ten-year Trojan war arose because of the apple that was the price of three women contending over beauty, one of them promising Helen to the shepherd who was their judge. Memon and the Amazons brought aid to Priam. And from these events followed the origins of the Franks. Priam was their first king. It is written in books of history how afterwards they had Friga as their king.[20]

This is only the start of a much longer and detailed narrative. It gives a more comprehensive account of the different divisions of the Trojan heroes, follows the history of the group that became the Macedonians to Philip and Alexander the Great. Then the narrative focuses on the other part who elected a king with the name Francio from which the Franks derived their name. Under

18 Fredegar, *Chronicae* III, 2, ed. Krusch, p. 30, cf. above, p. 159, with n. 13.
19 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 2.4–9, ed. Krusch, pp. 45–47.
20 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 2.4, ed. Krusch, p. 45.

Francio they came to Europe, but after the death of this king they decided to be ruled by dukes and rejected the authority of any other king. According to the account, it was only the Romans who were able to challenge Frankish independence in the time of the Roman Caesar Pompeius.[21] With the help of an alliance with the Saxons they were able to fight back, and since then, "no people has been able to conquer the Franks. But the Franks have been able to subjugate them to their authority."[22]

After the assertion that the Macedonians managed similarly to live free from foreign domination, the chronicle mentions as a third people that originated from the Trojan heroes, the *Turci* who had received their name from their king Torquotus.[23] Then the chroniclers jump back to the history of ancient Israel,[24] after which they return to the history of the fourth group that fled from Troy, the Romans. Even in this section, for which the compilers of the chronicle would have certainly found enough material in Jerome's *Chronicle*, they decided to present a mélange of Jerome's original text and their additions until the very final sentence (quotations from Jerome in italics):

> *In the third year after the capture of Troy or as others want to believe in the eighth year, Aeneas ruled the Latins who were later called Romans*. Aeneas and Frigas, it is said, were brothers.[25]

This mélange of Roman and Frankish myth and history in the origin legend of the *Fredegar Chronicle* fits well to the overall efforts of the chroniclers to rework and reconfigure older histories, and particularly the rich legacy of Roman historiography, for a new time—a time after the end of the Roman empire.[26]

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21 On Pompeius, which seems to be a misunderstanding of the chroniclers confusing him with Caesar, see Bruno Krusch, "Die Chronicae des sogenannten Fredegar," *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde* 7 (1888), 257–351, and 421–516, here pp. 472–75.

22 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 2.5–6, p. 46.

23 On the enigmatic Torquotus and the Turcs, see the comprehensive discussion of Gerald Krutzler, "Die Wahrnehmung der nichtfränkischen Völker in der fränkischen Historiographie," in *Post-Roman Transitions: Christians and Barbarians in Post-Roman Europe*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 487–548.

24 For the rearrangement and its significance, see Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 222–31; for the effort and method to reorganize the text in this way, see the impressive reconstruction of Fischer, *Fredegar-Chronik*.

25 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 2.8, ed. Krusch, p. 47.

26 See now Gerda Heydemann and Helmut Reimitz, *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 2, *Post-Roman Multiplicity and New Political Identities* (Turnhout, 2020); for an excellent and concise discussion, see also Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 99–109.

But they also needed to respond to Gregory of Tours's *Histories* from the end of the 6th century. Gregory seems to have written the first post-Roman history to connect its historical narrative with the scale of the new Merovingian *regnum*, which may explain its considerable success and influence after the end of the 6th century.[27] He did so to promote his Christian vision of community as the main focus for social and political integration. His main focus was the long past of Christian Gaul. As I have argued elsewhere at greater length, he regarded the increasing salience and politicization of Frankish identity in the Merovingian kingdom as unwelcome competition to his Christian vision of community.[28] He therefore was not interested in providing Frankish identity with a long and prestigious past that would certainly have supported its establishment as a focus for social and political integration.

For Gregory, Frankish identity was not the problem—it was a symptom. Any form of political solidarity in the here and now was provisional and should not be mistaken for the peace and order in the world which was to come. This was true for all the *gentes* of Gregory's world; not only the *gens Francorum* but also other *gentes*, such as the Alemans, Thuringians, Burgundians, and even the Saxons, were subject to the same literary strategy.[29] As agents of history, they appear only in the second book and their role changes dramatically from the end of this book onwards as they lose their sharp profile as a people to become integrated into the Christian texture of the kingdom. However, it seems that Gregory did not find it necessary to make the same effort to deconstruct them as foci for social and political integration in his *Histories* as he had in the case of the *Franci*. Only in the case of the Romans do we find Gregory paying similarly energetic efforts to challenge history and identity as alternative foci for social and political integration in the Merovingian kingdom.[30]

The post-Roman fusion of Roman myth and history with a Frankish present in the *Fredegar Chronicle* was certainly one of the versions of a Frankish origin myth that Gregory would have found particularly concerning. It might well be that his discussion on the impossibility of finding reliable sources for the early history of the Franks anticipated precisely such a story. Some scholars have

27 See Helmut Reimitz, "The Early Medieval Editions of Gregory of Tours' *Historiae*," in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, ed. Alexander C. Murray (Leiden, 2016), pp. 519–66.

28 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 51–73.

29 See Krutzler "Wahrnehmung," pp. 510–12.

30 See Helmut Reimitz, "Histories of Romanness in the Merovingian Kingdoms," in *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities*, ed. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, Cinzia Grifoni, and Marianne Pollheimer-Mohaupt (Turnhout, 2018), pp. 289–308.

even argued that such a story was already in circulation and that Gregory actually responded to it with his discussion.[31] As Eugen Ewig once observed:

> In subject and in structure, the ninth chapter of the second book of Gregory's *Historiae* reflects the kernel of the Trojan myth: the question of the *primus rex*, the report of a migration of the Franks from Pannonia to the Rhine, the discussion of the early Frankish constitution.[32]

It is striking that Gregory's discussion of his sources raises some of the questions that are indeed addressed in other histories too when it came to explaining the emergence of new groups and collectives.[33] But this was precisely the narrative that Gregory did not want to offer. Instead, he drew together sources upon which such a story that anchored the Franks firmly in the distant past of Roman and biblical history would have depended, but in comparing and analysing these different historical authorities, he demonstrated that such a myth would have no basis in the available evidence.

In making this claim, however, Gregory had to work against a much richer tradition than just *one* circulating story about the Trojan origins of the Franks. The assimilation of Roman history with those of cities, groups, and peoples had a long history in Gaul. Already the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, who wrote at the end of the 4th century, was confused by the multiplicity of different origin legends. After discussing some of them, he decided not to continue recounting more since he did not want to bore his audience.[34] Particularly, Virgilian motifs and myths are well documented in different literary and political contexts in Gaul, for instance in the works of Ammianus's contemporary Ausonius,[35] or in the century before them, as part of the rhetoric of the usurper Carausius.[36] Communities in Gaul seem to have used Virgilian myth to link themselves to a Roman past long before and after Ammianus's

31 Johnathan Barlow, "Gregory of Tours and the Myth of the Trojan Origins of the Franks," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1995), pp. 86–89.

32 Eugen Ewig, "Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte," in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht von Zülpich"* (*496/97*), ed. Dieter Geuenich, RGA, suppl. vol. 19 (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1–30, here, p. 10 (my translation).

33 Cf. above, n. 3.

34 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, 15.9.7, ed. Wolfgang Seyfarth, *Ammianus Marcellinus*, Römische Geschichte 4 (Berlin, 1988), p. 142.

35 See Ralph Mathisen, "*Peregrini*, *barbari* and *cives Romani.* Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006), 1011–40; and Gregson N. Davis, "Cupid at the Ivory Gates. Ausonius as a Reader of Vergil's Aeneid," *Colby Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (1994), 162–70.

36 See Krutzler, "Fremdwahrnehmungen," pp. 156–59; Barlow, "Gregory."

time.[37] Lucan reports that the *Averni*—who lived in the region that is until today called Auvergne—claimed to be Roman relatives and of Trojan descent from the reign of the Emperor Nero onward.[38] In the later 5th century, Sidonius Apollinaris writes in one of his letters that on a lake near his country villa in the Auvergne, games were held that re-enacted the contest of Drepanum in Virgil's *Aeneid*.[39] Also, barbarian newcomers to Gaul used the Trojan myth as a vehicle for their integration into the empire. Ammianus reports that the Burgundians claimed to be of the same descent as the Romans.[40] We might agree with Ian Wood that in the second half of the 4th century, when officers of Frankish descent rose to the highest ranks in the Roman army, similar claims became popular among Frankish groups or elites in Gaul, too.[41]

As later authors such as the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle* picked up this particular thread in the search for the origins of the Franks, it produced the dominant theme of various origin stories for Frankish, and later, French historiography.[42] Thus, the early medieval perspective often reduces the disparate ancient and late-antique evidence for the circulation of stories of Trojan descent in Gaul only to fragments of *the* later Frankish origin myth.[43] However, there were many varieties of the myth and differences in its appropriation:

37 See Fritz Mitthof, "Zur Neustiftung von Identität unter imperialer Herrschaft. Die Provinzen des Römischen Reiches als ethnische Entitäten," in *Visions of Community: Ethnicity, Religion and Power in the Early Medieval West, Byzantium and the Islamic World*, ed. Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, and Richard Payne (Aldershot, 2013), pp. 61–72, with further references.

38 See Barlow, "Gregory," pp. 87–88; though Lucan did not seem to approve of this claim, see Lucan, *Bellum civile*, 1.427–28: "Arvernique ausi Latio se fingere, fratres sanguine ab Iliaco populi"; for the Aeduan appropriation in Eunomius of Autun in the late 3rd century, *Panegyrici Latini*, 9, ed. Roger B. Mynors, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The "Panegyrici Latini"; Introduction, Translation, and Historical Commentary, with the Latin Text* (Oxford, 1964), pp. 145–51.

39 Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, 2.2.19, ed. William B. Anderson, Loeb Classical Library, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA, 1936), 1:435.

40 Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res gestae*, 28.5.11, ed. Seyfarth, p. 132.

41 Wood, "Defining the Franks."

42 See Kordula Wolf, *Troja – Metamorphosen eines Mythos: Französische, englische und italienische Überlieferungen des 12. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich* (Berlin, 2008); Frantisek Graus, "Troja und trojanische Herkunftssage im Mittelalter," in *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter*, ed. Wilhlem Erzgräber (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 25–43; and the forthcoming monograph of Kıvılcım Yavuz on the transmission and adaptation of the Trojan narrative in the medieval West.

43 A good example is, Anton, "Origo gentis," pp. 189–95.

it was only one option among many in the search for origins in late-antique Gaul.[44]

These efforts to find *the* origin myth of the Franks, however, were not just driven by older historical and philological approaches and ideas aiming to reconstruct the archetype of ancient stories and texts. They also belonged to a specific approach to the study of origin legends in ancient and medieval history as kernels of tradition—as *Traditionskern*—of ethnic groups. Eugen Ewig's interpretation of Gregory's discussion of sources as reflecting the kernel of the Frankish Trojan myth is a good example of this tendency.[45] The approach had been made more popular in the massive, impressive, but also in many respects outdated study by Reinhard Wenskus.[46] One of Wenskus's key points was that the belief in a shared descent cultivated by late-antique and early medieval tribes or peoples helped to forge and maintain the social coherence of these ethnically, and culturally highly heterogenous groups. Indeed, it was the power of the myth of a common descent that gave the nascent *gentes* the flexibility to integrate diverse elements into their community.[47]

The intensification of reflection about one's history and one's place in larger social groups is well documented in a variety of histories that were written in

44 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 267–81, see also the succinct and excellent discussion of Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 104–10.

45 Cf. above, p. 164.

46 Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung: Das Werden der frühmittelalterlichen gentes* (Cologne, 1961, 2nd ed. 1977).

47 The use of the concept of the *Traditionskern* by Herwig Wolfram in his study on the Goths, Herwig Wolfram, *Die Goten: Von ihren Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 1979, 4th rev. ed. 2001), came to be the main focus of critique of Wolfram's study, and later of the studies on early medieval ethnicity by his student Walter Pohl, although Pohl has already made clear that he did not find Wenskus's approach very helpful and suggested to look at the formation and transformation of late-antique and early medieval peoples as a discourse in an article he published in 1994 (see Walter Pohl, "Tradition, Ethnogenese und literarische Gestaltung: Eine Zwischenbilanz," in *Ethnogenese und Überlieferung: Angewandte Methoden der Frühmittelalterforschung*, ed. Karl Brunner and Brigitte Merta (Vienna, 1994), pp. 9–26); for the debate until the end of the 20th century see also my short entry, Helmut Reimitz, "Ethnogenesis," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. Roger Bagnall (London, 2012), pp. 2528–31 at https://doi-org.ezproxy.princeton.edu/10.1002/9781444338386.wbeah12081 (accessed 17 March 2020); for a collection of essays with a sometimes overly and to my mind unnecessarily polemical critique on the concept, see Andrew Gillet, ed., On *Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 221–39; for the decade-long experimentation with approaches to the study of ethnicity and ethnic identities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages, see now the overview by Walter Pohl, "Von der Ethnogenese zur Identitätsforschung," in *Neue Wege der Frühmittelalterforschung: Bilanz und Perspektiven*, ed. Walter Pohl, Maximilian Diesenberger, and Bernhard Zeller (Vienna, 2018), pp. 9–34.

that period.[48] However, reducing the construction of identities to the transmission of one central narrative which represented the kernel of tradition for a community is a much too inflexible and narrow approach to the construction of identities in the early Middle Ages (as well as in other periods). As more recent approaches to the study of identities as open-ended processes have shown, the success of identities as *foci* for social integration, their construction and reconstruction, builds rather on a surplus of meaning than on a restricted and policed kernel of tradition—a *Traditionskern*.[49] Instead of studying the extant stories as the transmissions and representations of a *Traditionskern*, I would rather suggest exploring them as part of the circuits of communication that shaped and reshaped the construction of identities by creating a shared past for a community.

In taking stock of newer sociological and anthropological approaches, Walter Pohl suggested a while ago exploring these open-ended processes as a discourse in the sense of Michel Foucault[50]—a discourse that defined the *Spielräume* for the articulation of such a shared past. Following such an approach has important consequences for studying the meaning and social function of origin legends. Instead of focusing on putative 'core elements' of an extant origin legend, we rather need to try reconstructing the *Spielräume* of its creation that were defined by this discourse. As Pohl has argued in a recent article on narratives of origin, we should understand the extant texts not only through their role for the self-assurance of communities. We should also study them as parts of wider circuits of communication between insiders and outsiders that reflect on the emergence, continuity, and role of new groups and peoples to both, insiders as well as outsiders.[51]

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48 Coumert, *Origines des peoples*, arguing that the important social function of these largely fictive accounts is well documented in the writing, rewriting, and transmission of origin legends; cf. Pohl, "Narratives of Origin," esp. pp. 200–02; see also now the contributions in Heydemann and Reimitz, *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 2.

49 For a critical discussion of the *Traditionskern* and new directions see already Pohl "Tradition, Ethnogenese"; for an English article from the 1990s, see Walter Pohl, "Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response," in *On Barbarian Identity*, ed. Andrew Gillett, pp. 221–39.

50 Pohl, "Tradition, Ethnogenese"; for a comprehensive discussion of a new methodological profile for the study of collective identities and ethnicity in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, see, Walter Pohl, "Introduction – Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile," in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 1–64.

51 Pohl, "Narratives of Origin."

What was the spectrum of possibilities for the narrative of an origin legend, what were the alternatives, and why did an author make the choices he or she did?

As for Gregory's discussion on the impossibility of finding any reliable sources for a Frankish origin myth, one might speculate that it was precisely the multiplicity of stories about the origins of communities that circulated in late-antique Gaul that helped Gregory to make his point. However, it was not only literary traditions, but also Merovingian politics that created the *Spielraum* for Gregory's polemic. The establishment of Merovingian rule over most of Gaul had a history that created a specific power balance between the kings and the different elites and groups in the kingdom. When Clovis, the first Christian king of the Franks, expanded his reign over most of the territories of the former Gaulish provinces, he came to rule regions that had already established themselves as largely independent power blocs from Roman imperial rule.[52] As Stefan Esders has recently emphasized, Clovis became the ruler of these power blocs not so much through conquest as through negotiations and the concession of far-reaching autonomies and privileges for different populations in exchange for their recognition of his rule.[53]

As a result, the Merovingians did not only come to rule a socially and ethnically highly diverse kingdom, they also reinforced or even multiplied this diversity by various contracts with the different groups and their elites. What we can observe, is the formation of a patchwork of communities with quite different but also overlapping traditions and frameworks. In this situation, the Merovingian kings put themselves in an equidistant position to all the different groups and groupings in their kingdom and thus in the centre of a power balance that was hard to imagine without them.[54] Frankish groups were just one of the many different groups that Clovis had come to rule. This may well have been the reason why the early Merovingian kings issued their official

52 See now Stefan Esders, "Nordwestgallien um 500. Von der militarisierten spätrömischen Provinzgesellschaft zur erweiterten Militäradministration des merowingischen Königtums," in *Chlodwigs Welt: Organisation von Herrschaft um 500*, ed. Mischa Meier and Steffen Patzold (Stuttgart, 2014), pp. 339–61.

53 See also Matthias Becher, *Chlodwig I.: Der Aufstieg der Merowinger und das Ende der antiken Welt* (Munich, 2011), pp. 149–56, for the example of the conquest of the kingdom of Soissons with an interesting interpretation of Remigius's letter along those lines.

54 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish identity*, pp. 98–103, building on the idea of a Merovingian "politics of consensus"; cf. Ian N. Wood, "Kings, Kingdoms and Consent," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. Ian N. Wood and Peter Sawyer (Leeds, 1977), pp. 6–29; Paul Fouracre, "'Placita' and the Settlement of Disputes," in *The Settlement of Disputes in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Paul Fouracre and Wendy Davies (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 23–44.

documents not as *reges Francorum*—kings of the Franks—but with the absolute title *rex*.[55]

And even as 'Frankish' kings, Clovis and his successors had to take sensibilities of several Frankish groups into account. As we know from Gregory, Clovis killed one by one his Frankish relatives to bring their kingdoms in the northeast of Gaul under his reign.[56] Gregory also tells us about an usurpation of a certain Munderic who may well have been one of the descendants of the kings that Clovis had eliminated. Munderic lived at the time of Clovis's son and successor, Theuderic, and claimed to have the same right to rule as the Merovingian king himself, a challenge that cost him his life in a dramatic battle.[57] The unusually heroic stylization of Munderic's deeds[58] might be explained by the fact that descendants of Munderic married into the family of Gregory's senatorial ancestors.[59] In other cases, Gregory did not choose to embellish the histories of other kings or royal families with similarly heroic motifs and stories.[60] Yet it would be surprising if the cultural milieu of late- and post-Roman Gaul had not produced a great number of stories and narratives like the *Gesta Munderici*.

In short: the historiographical *Spielräume* that Gregory was able to employ were not only literary or historiographical. They were also closely related to the actual cultural, social, and political options resulting from the specifics of the establishment of the Merovingian kingdoms. The fact that these *Spielräume* were relatively wide was a product of political necessity: the Merovingian kings had to consider not only the sensibilities of different Frankish groups but also the histories and narratives of many other groups, and not least the various Roman populations and elites in the different regions of Gaul. Gregory used these *Spielräume* to promote a Christian vision of community offering an origin narrative about the long Christian past of Gaul that was designed to guide Merovingian society into a common Christian future. In so doing he not only employed but also recreated and redefined these *Spielräume* for

55 See Helmut Reimitz, "Die Franken und ihre Geschichten," in *Neue Wege*, ed. Pohl, Diesenberger, and Zeller, pp. 201–17, here 207–09.

56 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 2.40–42, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 89–93.

57 Gregory of Tours, *Histories*, 3.14, ed. Krusch and Levison, pp. 110–12.

58 See Walter Goffart, "Conspicuously Absent. Martial Heroism in the Histories of Gregory of Tours," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian N. Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 367–93, here 371.

59 For the sharp, intriguing, but nevertheless speculative interpretation of the evidence see Heike Grahn-Hoek, "Gundulfus subregulus. Eine genealogische Brücke zwischen Merowingern und Karolingern," *Deutsches Archiv zur Erforschung des Mittelalters* 59 (2003), 1–47.

60 Cf. above p. 160.

successive generations of historians. We should thus look at the composition of origin narratives like the one in the *Fredegar Chronicle* that reacted to Gregory not as the emergence of the true Frankish origin myth that Gregory wanted to supress. We should rather try to explore them as part of a polyphonic discussion from which most voices are lost, but which can be partially reconstructed through the specific strategies by which the narratives react to their alternatives. The key to the formation of a discourse was not the original meaning of a true and old origin myth but these ongoing debates in which scribes and scholars continually and competitively invested narratives about their origins with new meaning and social prestige.

While longer alternative narratives to Gregory's have not come down to us from the 6th century, the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle* clearly took up the debate with Gregory. However, the compilers were not only in conversation with the bishop of Tours. They wanted above all to create a narrative that responded to the social and political circumstances of the Merovingian kingdom in the 7th century.[61] It is easy to see how, contra Gregory, the compilers of this chronicle emphasized the role of the Franks as a collective agent in the history of the world.[62] It seems to have been equally important for them to provide readers of the chronicle with a new social imagination of the world as a world divided among peoples. The emphasis on the shared descent from Troy with the Romans that the chroniclers constructed in their rewriting of the Jerome *Chronicle* not only highlighted a shared prestigious history. It also placed the Franks alongside other peoples in the history of the world, such as the Macedonians, Turcs, Romans, Burgundians, and many more. This fits indeed well with the political efforts in the 7th century to accommodate and organize the socially, legally, and ethnically pluralistic landscape in the Merovingian kingdoms.[63] However, the emphasis on the dukes and their important role in Frankish history shows that the chronicle does not represent a perspective from the royal court. In fact, the chroniclers created their vision of a common Frankish past to articulate the claims of the aristocracy vis-à-vis

61 For the context of the composition, see above, n. 28.

62 For a longer discussion see also Coumert, *Les origines*, pp. 316–22; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 52–72, and 168–74.

63 See Ian N. Wood, *The Merovingian Kingdoms 450–751* (London, 1994), pp. 140–58. Stefan Esders, *Römische Rechtstradition und merowingisches Königtum: Zum Rechtscharakter politischer Herrschaft in Burgund im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 134 (Göttingen, 1997); Stefan Esders and Helmut Reimitz, "Legalizing Ethnicity: The Remaking of Citizenship in Post-Roman Gaul," in *Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Els Rose and Cédric Bélaz (Turnhout), pp. 295–329.

the Merovingian kings. Not the kings, but the Frankish aristocracy and their responsible political actions were the key that maintained the stability of the Merovingian kingdom.[64]

The oppositional tendencies also indicate that the origin legend of the *Fredegar Chronicle* does not represent an accepted consensus about the origins of the Franks in the 7th century. The pressure groups behind the composition and transmission of the chronicle were rather the elites of the eastern and south-eastern regions of the Frankish kingdoms in the Austrasian and Burgundian kingdoms. The chronicle clearly articulated their important role in the history of the Merovingian kingdoms after the centre of political gravity had shifted to the north-western regions of the Merovingian kingdom with the establishment of Chlothar II as its sole ruler.[65] A more 'western' version has come down to us as well when the power balance shifted again and this time to the north-eastern regions. It was compiled a few generations after the composition of the *Fredegar Chronicle* in a time when the ancestors of the Carolingians had come to firmly control the politics of the Merovingian kingdom under the father of the first Carolingian king, Charles Martel. This is the version of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, a relatively brief history that was finished in 726/27, probably by a monk or a nun at Soissons.[66] In contrast to the *Fredegar Chronicle*, the *Liber* presented the Franks from the western centres of the Neustrian kingdom as the 'real Franks,' which of course also had a profound effect on how the text presented its version of the Trojan origin legend.

Like the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle*, the author of the *Liber* took up the debate with Gregory and also used the Merovingian six-book version of Gregory's *Histories* for the first part of the narrative. The *Liber*'s version of the Trojan origin myth, however, is not inserted into Gregory's narrative but comes before the excerpts from the *Histories* right at the start of the narrative.

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64 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 231–36, on the critical view of the chronicle of Merovingian kings, see already Ian Wood, "Deconstructing the Merovingian Family," in *The Construction of Communities in the Early Middle Ages: Texts, Resources, Artefacts*, ed. Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger, and Helmut Reimitz, The Transformation of the Roman World 12 (Leiden, 2003), pp. 149–71.

65 See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 190–99; Fischer, "Rewriting"; and cf. already Wood, "Fredegar's Fables," all with further references to older literature.

66 Richard Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Oxford, 1987); Janet Nelson, "Gender and Genre in Women Historians of the Early Middle Ages," in *L'historiographie medieval en Europe*, ed. Jean-Philippe Genet (Paris, 1990), pp. 143–63; repr. in Janet Nelson, *The Frankish World* (London, 1996), pp. 183–98; Martina Hartmann, "Die Darstellung der Frauen im Liber historiae Francorum und die Verfasserfrage," *Concilium Medii Aevi* 7 (2004), 209–37.

> Let us set forth the beginnings of the kings of the Franks, their own origin and that of those peoples as well as their deeds. In Asia there is a stronghold of the Trojans where a city called Ilium is in which Aeneas ruled. The people (*gens*) was strong and mighty, men exceedingly prone to warring again and again, provoking constant combat, and conquering the neighbouring lands all around them.[67]

The placement of the origin legend in front of the excerpted *Histories* already shows that the narrative's focus lies principally with the *Franci*. Their existence does not develop out of history in a complex game of separation and differentiation. They are the sole and direct descendants of the Trojans, who preserve their character as battle-hardened people. A linear narrative proceeds from the fall of Troy to follow the remaining army of the Trojans led by their rulers Priam and Antenor, to the Maeotian Swamps, the border between Asia and Europe.[68] That Gregory had been unable to find any early king of the Franks, so the message of the *Liber* went, was consequently unsurprising. For the former Trojans had remained Trojans for a long time. They only acquired their name in the interaction with the Romans under the reign of the Roman emperor Valentinian for whom they fought successfully against the Alans.[69] Having proven their bravery and ferocity in the battle, Valentinian called them *Franci* which, so the author explained, meant "the wild ones" in the Greek language.[70] It did not take long for the Franks' character traits to turn against their name-giver. When they were supposed to be paying taxes, they refused to do so and went to war against the empire. Although they valiantly kept up the fight, they eventually had to recognize imperial superiority and fled to Germania along the river Rhine.[71]

Once in Germania, the narrative of the *Liber* connects with Gregory's account. For many years, the Franks lived under the rule of the *principes* Marchomir and Sunno—who were also mentioned by Gregory or his sources as *duces* or *regales*.[72] When Sunno died, the *Franci* began to elect kings. The first

67 *Liber historiae Francorum*, cc. 1–5, ed. Krusch, pp. 241–46; cf. Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 170–75.

68 For the *Meotides paludes* as the border between Asia and Europe and its reception in the *Liber historiae Francorum* see Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 22–29; and Coumert, *Les origines des peuples*, pp. 328–30.

69 For Valentinian see Wood, "Defining the Franks," p. 52, and Ewig, "Die Franken und Rom."

70 *Liber historiae Francorum*, c. 2, ed. Krusch, p. 243, for the naming, see also Ulrich Nonn, *Die Franken* (Stuttgart, 2010), pp. 12–13.

71 *Liber historiae Francorum*, c. 4, ed. Krusch, p. 244.

72 See. above, p. 160 with n. 15.

rex Francorum is a new name in the received historiographical tradition: Faramund. And as the first king, he is also the first of the kings with long hair—the *reges criniti*, a feature of the Merovingian kings that had already been mentioned by Gregory as well.[73] With the arrival of Faramund's son Chlodio, the *Liber* starts treading the definitively established paths of Merovingian genealogy and succession. Chlodio is the father of Merovech, who in the *Liber* as in the *Fredegar Chronicle*, is the *heros eponymos* of the Merovingian kings.[74] Under Chlodio and Merovech, the Franks cross the Rhine into the core regions of the later Frankish kingdoms, and they do so in a wild and dramatic fashion. On the other side of the Rhine, Chlodio killed a great number of people and after the conquest of Cambrai, had all the Romans that he found in the city killed. The complete annihilation of populations is also mentioned for cities that the author considered the core of his contemporary Francia—that is, the north-western areas of the Merovingian kingdom, centred on Tournai, Cambrai, Soissons, and of course Paris. The sharp delineation of conquered territory in the *Liber* is also connected to an explicit and consistent definition of the Franks living within it.

With his martial rhetoric, the author of the *Liber* has for a long time been seen to represent the voices of an increasingly self-confident Frankish warrior society in the western parts of the kingdom. However, the *Liber*'s conspicuous martial rhetoric was probably impacted less by the mentality of a Germanic or barbarian 'warrior society' and more by Old Testament language and history.[75] Biblical history had already played an important role in Gregory's *Histories* and the *Chronicle of Fredegar*. Both texts, albeit in very different ways, begin with a sketch of Old Testament history. Gregory developed important typologies in his first book to which he returned later in his narrative.[76] The compiler of the *Fredegar Chronicle* did not just juxtapose biblical history with other histories available in the Jerome *Chronicle*, but also started the chain of chronicles with extensive lists of biblical prophets, kings, and peoples alongside non-biblical

73 See above, pp. 160, with n. 17.

74 Compare *Liber historiae Francorum*, c. 5, ed. Krusch, p. 246; with Fredegar, *Chronicae*, 3.9, ed. Krusch, p. 95.

75 For a longer discussion see, Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, pp. 258–59, 275–76, and Philipp Dörler, "The *Liber historiae Francorum*—A Model for a New Frankish Self-Confidence," *Networks and Neighbours* 1 (2013), 23–43, and on the uses of the Bible in early medieval Francia in the late Merovingian and early Carolingian period see now the fundamental study of Gerda Heydemann, "The People of God and the Law: Biblical Models," *Speculum* 95, no. 1 (2020), 89–131, with further references to the uses of the Bible in Frankish society and politics.

76 Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours*, pp. 139–45.

kings and emperors.[77] With their historical-exegetical beginnings, these two works articulated very different narrative frames. Gregory's *Histories* presented biblical history as a prefiguration of a Christian world that was organized along the distinctions between Christianity and paganism, orthodoxy and heresy. The synchronization of biblical with other histories provided the Fredegar chronicler with the historical foundations needed to illustrate a world divided among peoples. The author of the *Liber* took another approach to biblical *historia*: he rewrote it as a history of the Franks. In employing biblical motifs, style, and narrative patterns, this history presented the Franks as the new chosen people; this strategy mirrored the history of the biblical chosen people as a history full of failures, errors, and efforts to find the right paths to attain God's support once more.

This providential perspective is worked into Frankish history from early on. When the Franks under Chlodio were still living east of the Rhine, the king sent *exploratores* across the river to the city of Cambrai. The passage would have reminded any early medieval churchgoer of the story of Joshua, who sends *exploratores* across the Jordan to scout out Jericho.[78] Given the biblical background that the Rhine crossing evokes, the 'barbarian' actions of the *Franci* against *Romani* begin to look more biblical than barbarian. Just as the Franks attacked all the Romans they found in Cambrai, Joshua's Israelites did the same to the Canaanites of Jericho, killing everyone they found in the city.[79]

The obvious differences in the origin narratives have often been regarded as an indication for the unfamiliarity of the author of the *LHF* with the *Chronicle of Fredegar*.[80] Yet, there are some conspicuous commonalities that indicate that historians might have underestimated the historiographical horizons of the *Liber*'s author.[81] As more recent studies on Merovingian culture, and particularly late Merovingian culture, have made clear there is enough extant evidence from Merovingian *scriptoria* and cultural centres, particularly in the first decades of the 8th century, to show that the *LHF* came from a vibrant cultural world of well-informed and connected historiographical activity.[82] For her or his intervention into these debates, the author of the *LHF* chose a form

77 Fredegar, *Chronicae*, book I, ed. by Krusch, pp. 18–42.

78 Joshua 2:1.

79 Joshua 6:21.

80 E.g. Anton, "Origo gentis," p. 192; Gerberding, *The Rise*, p. 17.

81 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 330–32; Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, pp. 251–58.

82 Ian N. Wood, "The Problem of Merovingian Culture," in *Exzerpieren – Kompilieren – Tradieren: Transformationen des Wissens zwischen Spätantike und Frühmittelalter*, ed. Stephan Dusil, Gerald Schwedler, and Raphael Schwitter, Millennium Studien 64 (Berlin, 2016), pp. 198–222; and Helmut Reimitz, "Genre and Identity in Merovingian

of historical writing that was strongly inspired by the narrative of the most important *historia* of the Christian world: the biblical history of the chosen people. This choice might well have corresponded with expectations of the (real or imagined) audience the author had, including the powerful but certainly Christian members of the Frankish warrior class. But it might also have helped to create new opportunities for crafting the narrative by including the narrative of the origins of the Franks. We might speculate that the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle* decided to build on the model of the Christian world chronicle because they regarded it as the most suitable form for meeting the expectations held by social and political elites in the once so powerful Austro-Burgundian *regnum*. The generic choice might also have created new *Spielräume* by avoiding the expectations Gregory's *Histories* had established. With the two most prominent genres of Christian history already taken by Gregory's *Church History* and the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, the author of the *Liber historiae Francorum* decided to employ the model of biblical history.

To conclude: for our reconstruction of conversations and debates that defined the *Spielräume* for the early history of Frankish origin legends the three discussed Merovingian texts provide us with a fascinatingly diverse panorama. There might have been more voices and more versions, and even very different ones. Another intervention might have come down to us in the cosmography of Aethicus Ister whose recent editor Michael Herren suggested that it was written soon after the composition of the *Liber historiae Francorum*.[83] The reception and transmission of the texts in later centuries show that it was above all these narratives by Gregory, the compilers of the *Fredegar Chronicle*, the *Liber historiae Francorum*, and Aethicus Ister which later generations continued to work and to rework. When members of the Carolingian family, for instance, reworked, rearranged, and continued the *Fredegar Chronicle*, they complemented the origin legend that was inserted into the Jerome *Chronicle* with a fictitious eyewitness account of the fall of Troy written by a certain Dares.[84] There are also some interesting similarities

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Historiography," in *Historiography of Identity*, vol. 2, ed. Heydemann and Reimitz, pp. 161–212; pp. 193–4.

83 See Michael Herren, ed., *The Cosmography of Aethicus Ister* (Turnhout, 2011) who suggests that the cosmography was composed soon after 726/27, see also N. Kıvılcım Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne: The Tradition of Trojan Origins," in *The Medieval History Journal, Special issue on Narratives of Ethnic Origins: Eurasian Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (2018), 251–90 (DOI: 10.1177/0971945818775372), and her forthcoming monograph on the history of Trojan myth in medieval Europe pp. 259–60; Coumert, *Origines des peoples*, pp. 343–45.

84 On the reorganization of the chronicle see Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 309–26; on the *Historia Daretis*, see now Frederic Clark, *The First Pagan Historian: The Fortunes of a Fraud from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Oxford,

between the rearrangement of the Frankish origins in this Carolingian version of the *Fredegar Chronicle* and the brief account in the cosmography of Aethicus Ister.

In the Carolingian library of Lorsch, one of the main reform hubs of the emerging Carolingian empire at the end of the 8th and beginning of the 9th century, scribes and scholars were collecting various texts and versions of the history of Troy and early Frankish history.[85] One of the earliest manuscripts of the *Liber* has come down to us via this library. In it we find the early chapters of the *Liber* combined with Virgil's *Aeneid* and the above-mentioned history of the fall of Troy by Dares.[86] The library had another version of the *Liber* as well, which the scribes continued with an annalistic narrative—the so-called *Annales Nazariani*.[87] Historians at Lorsch certainly knew the *Fredegar Chronicle*. They produced, however, their own version, removing all the books of the chain of chronicles before the independent narrative (book IV in the edition) and replacing the rewritings of Jerome and Gregory of the original chronicle with a much more comprehensive new version of the *Ten Books* of Gregory of Tours.[88] In so doing they also replaced the Trojan origin myth in their rewritings of Jerome and Gregory with Gregory's history and provided the Franks of the *Fredegar Chronicle* with a past that was above all the long past of Christian Gaul. Closely connected with the monastery of Lorsch was the bishopric of Metz, where Gregory's Christian origins of the Frankish kingdoms played an important role in revising the history of the bishops of Metz. In the 780s, Paul the Deacon had provided the bishops of Metz with a history that linked the history of the bishopric to the family of the Carolingian rulers through Arnulf of Metz. Paul presented Arnulf not only as the venerable bishop of Metz but

2020); and on the reworking of the origin legend in the new version of the chronicle, Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne."

85 McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 186–217; Julia Becker, Tino Licht, Stefan Weinfurter, eds., *Karolingische Klöster: Wissenstransfer und kulturelle Innovation* (Berlin, 2015); Helmut Reimitz, "Transformations of Late Antiquity. The Writing and Rewriting of Church History in the Carolingian Empire: The Example of Lorsch," in *Cultural Memory and the Resources of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick et al. (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 262–81.

86 Richard Gerberding, "Paris, Bibliothèque nationale Latin 7906. An Unnoticed Very Early Fragment of the 'Liber historiae Francorum,'" *Traditio* 43 (1987), 381–86; and cf. Reimitz, "Transformations of Late Antiquity," pp. 274–76.

87 Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Pal. Lat. 966, on the manuscripts, see McKitterick, *Perceptions*, pp. 84–88.

88 For the Carolingian version, see Reimitz, "The Early Medieval Editions," pp. 540–49, with further references to the studies of Martin Heinzelmann and Pascale Bourgain.

also as a member of a family of the same noble Frankish ancestry as the Carolingian kings.[89] A generation or so later, the genealogists and historians in Metz replaced the focus on the Frankish descent of Arnulf with a focus on ancestors from a more spiritual genealogy with bishops in the south of Gaul who also appear prominently in Gregory's *Histories*.[90] The search for origins certainly did not come to an end in the Carolingian period. As history went on, so did the history of Frankish origin legends. But it might have looked different from what modern scholars were expecting with their idea about what constituted the core and nature of an origin myth. As I have tried to illustrate with this brief outline of the early history of Frankish origin legends, instead of reconstructing the origin myth or kernel of tradition, we should try to study the discourses of origin legends, their formation and transformation, by exploring the extant narratives as part of an ongoing conversation or debate. The Carolingian period has left us a particularly rich and varied evidence, with different versions in the form of rewritings and rearrangements of earlier narratives, in addition to new texts that we have only just begun to explore more systematically and comprehensively.[91] In some of these manuscripts, books, or texts from or after the Carolingian period we might even recover some of the lost voices of the earlier history of debates and reflections on the origins of the Franks in the Merovingian period too.

89 See Paul the Deacon, *Liber de episcopis Mettensibus*, ed. and trans. Damien Kempf (Dallas, 2013) with an excellent introduction, and Ian N. Wood, "Genealogy Defined by Women. The Case of the Pippinids," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia Smith (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 234–56.

90 The most comprehensive study is still Otto G. Oexle, "Die Karolinger und die Stadt des heiligen Arnulf," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 1 (1967), 250–364, and cf. now also Hans Hummer, *Visions of Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 289–97.

91 See my comments in Helmut Reimitz, "Histories of Carolingian Historiography," in *Historiography and Identity*, vol. 3, *Carolingian Approaches*, ed. Rutger Kramer, Helmut Reimitz, and Graeme Ward (Turnhout, 2021), pp. 1–35; and for some recent examples, see Clemens Gantner, Rosamond McKitterick, and Sven Meeder, eds., *The Resources of the Past in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 15–33; Martin Heinzelmann and Monique Goullet, eds., *La réécriture hagiographique dans l' occident médieval: transformations formelles et idéologiques*, Beihefte der Francia, 58 (Sigmaringen, 2003); Monique Goullet, Écriture et réécriture hagiographiques*: Essai sur les réécritures de vies de saints dans l'Occident latin médiéval* (*VIII–XIIIe s.*) (Turnhout, 2005); Richard Corradini, Maximilian Diesenberger, and Meta Niederkorn-Bruck, eds., *Zwischen Niederschrift und Wiederschrift: Frühmittelalterliche Hagiographie und Historiographie im Spannungsfeld von Kompendienüberlieferung und Editionstechnik* (Vienna, 2010).

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CHAPTER 8

The Legend of Trojan Origins in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Tapestries

Michael Clarke

The place of the fall of Troy in medieval narratives of identity is one of the recurring themes of this book.[1] It should not be surprising to find that the focus is on the defeated Trojans rather than the victorious Greeks, since the canonical source was not Homer (whose works are largely irrelevant for our period in the West) but Virgil's *Aeneid* amplified by the commentaries of Servius. Aeneas and the Romans served as a controlling paradigm for the idea of an origin legend originating in the fall of the city and the wanderings of the survivors.[2] If one asks why so many peoples of the central and later Middle Ages, with their homelands far from the world of Mediterranean Antiquity—French,[3] English,[4] Normans,[5]

1 See esp. the contributions of Reimitz, Niles, and Fulton in this volume.

2 See Sinéad O'Sullivan, "From Troy to Aachen: Ancient Rome and the Carolingian Reception of Vergil," in *Inscribing Knowledge in the Medieval Book: The Power of Paratexts*, ed. Rosalind Brown-Grant et al. (Berlin, 2019), pp. 185–96.

3 The standard overview remains Marc-René Jung, *La Légende de Troie en France au moyen age: analyse des versions françaises et bibliographie raisonnée des manuscrits* (Basle, 1996). See also Louis Faivre d'Arcier, *Histoire et géographie d'un mythe: la circulation des manuscrits du "De excidio Troiae" de Darès le Phrygien* (Paris, 2006).

4 On Brutus, the British, and the English see Fulton in this volume, and cf. Elizabeth M. Tyler, "Trojans in Anglo-Saxon England: Precedent without Descent," *Review of English Studies* 64 (2012), 1–20.

5 On Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Gesta Normannorum*, composed in the early 11th century, see Adam J. Goldwyn, "Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents: Epic Continuation in Eleventh to Thirteenth Century Genealogical Histories," in *Brill's Companion to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings of Classical Epic*, ed. Robert Simms (Leiden, 2018), pp. 154–74. Dudo's Trojan origin legend of the Normans was taken up in verse in the late 12th century by Benoît de Saint-Maure, better known for the *Roman de Troie* (see below), in his *Chronique des ducs de Normandie*: on the relationship see Charity Urbanski, *Writing History for the King: Henry II and the Politics of Vernacular Historiography* (Cornell, 2013), with Benjamin Pohl's study of the reception and manuscript history of Dudo's work, *Dudo of St Quentin's "Historia Normannorum": Tradition, Innovation and Memory* (York, 2015).

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Norse,[6] even the Dutch in the 1500s[7]—made such claims, it is probably enough to suggest that all, ultimately, were emulating the Trojan origin legend of the Carolingian Franks, which in turn made sense in terms of rivalry with Rome.[8] By the same token, a claim of the converse kind, declaring separation and 'otherness,' seems to drive legends like those of the Irish or the Goths, which locate their peoples' origins in distant and barbarous Scythia or the mysterious northern island of Scandza.[9] In this chapter I will use case studies from the art of tapestry to examine some of the characteristic articulations of the Trojan legend in the francophone world of the later Middle Ages, when it was crucial to the self-representation of the Valois dynasty on the French throne and the dukedom of Burgundy.

1 Jean de France and the Politics of Tapestry

Among the most familiar monuments of late medieval art is the January scene in the *Très Riches Heures*,[10] the last-commissioned and (among what survives) the most ambitious of the numerous books of hours commissioned by Jean de France, Duc de Berry, in the later years of his extraordinary career of artistic

6 On the Trojan identity of the Æsir in *Snorra Edda* and related legends elsewhere in Norse texts, see for example Jacob Hobson, "Euhemerism and the Veiling of History in Early Scandinavian Literature," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 116 (2017), 24–44; Jonas Wellendorf, *Gods and Humans in Medieval Scandinavia: Retying the Bonds* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 84–108.

7 The claim that the Dutch were descended from Trojans is declared on the title-page of the seminal *Divisiekroniek* of Cornelius Aurelius (1517), although in the main history this theme appears only in the context of noble lineages rather than the nation as a whole. See Karin Tilmans, *Historiography and Humanism in the Age of Erasmus: Cornelius Aurelius and the "Divisiekroniek" of 1517* (Nieuwkoop, 1992), pp. 208–10.

8 On the Trojan origin legend of the Franks, key treatments include Matthew Innes, "Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 227–49; Frederic N. Clark, "Reading the 'First Pagan Historiographer': Dares Phrygius and Medieval Genealogy," *Viator* 41 (2010), 203–26, with Clark's recent monograph (see below).

9 See Charles-Edwards, Kasperski and Rix in this volume. I have discussed the Irish material in a comparative perspective elsewhere: Michael Clarke, "The *Leabhar Gabhála* and Carolingian Origin Legends," in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe, Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship: A Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín*, ed. Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 440–80.

10 For up-to-date introductions to the *Très Riches Heures* see Patricia Stirnemann et al., *Les Très Riches Heures du duc de Berry et l'enluminure en France au début du XVe siècle* (Paris, 2004), with Patricia Stirnemann, "The King of Illuminated Manuscripts: The *Trés Riches Heures*," in *The Limbourg Brothers: Nijmegen Masters at the French Court 1400–1416*, ed. Rob Dückers and Pieter Roelofs (Nijmegen, 2005), pp. 113–20.

FIGURE 8.1 Detail of the January miniature from the *Très Riches Heures* of Jean de France, Duc de Berry

patronage up to his death in 1416 (Fig. 8.1).[11] The picture is rich in precise anecdotal detail, much of which can be corroborated by independent knowledge

11 On Jean de France as patron of the arts see Elisabeth Taburet-Delahaye, ed., *Paris 1400: Les Arts sous Charles VI*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, 2004), pp. 98–112; Duckers and Roelofs, *Nijmegen Masters*, passim; Timothy B. Husband, *The Art of Illumination: The Limbourg Brothers and the Belles Heures of Jean de France, Duc de Berry* (New York, 2008), pp. 2–45. On Jean de France's engagement with Roman Antiquity the classic treatment remains Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry: The Limbourgs and Their Contemporaries*, 2 vols (London, 1974), pp. 19–65 and notes.

about the duke and his life.[12] At a midwinter feast he sits in the seat of honour before the fireplace, wearing a robe of blue and gold: its colours speak of his status, matching the royal arms in the canopy over the chimney behind him, *azure, semé-de-lys or*.[13] Gold plates and vessels are displayed in the corner of the room, lapdogs run among the heaped dishes on the table;[14] courtiers cluster around the seated lord, the hesitant visitors urged by the guard *Approach, approach!*—Everything in the scene is symbolic of the power and public status of this Valois 'prince of the blood' at his dynasty's apogee, just like the pinnacled castles in the backgrounds of later scenes in the calendar series.

Less easy for the modern eye to interpret is the scene in the background: mounted knights issuing from a gateway, men on foot fighting lance to lance against an enemy army. The heraldry on the banners and surcoats of the mounted knights matches that of the unmounted men on the left side of the *mêlée*, suggesting that this is to be read as the same group in successive episodes of the same story. The line of the join with the wall shows clearly that this is a tapestry hanging by nails, and the clue to the meaning of the whole is provided by the tiny letters of the inscriptions (perhaps meant to be verse) on the upper register of the tapestry. Although most of this lettering is illegible, in the lines to the right of the canopy the tiny words "de troyes le grant" (of Troy the great) have been deciphered.[15] This phrase—which we will meet again later in this chapter—confirms that we are looking at an incident during the siege of Troy, depicted with the armour, heraldry, and battle tactics of contemporary Europe.

Tapestries in this period were powerful carriers of meaning. In 1393 Jean de Berry led a wartime negotiation with the representatives of Richard II of England, in which he and his brother Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy, acted

12 For close readings of the January scene see Jean Longnon and Raymond Cazelles, *Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry*, English ed. (London, 1969), notes on fol. 2r; Meiss, *Limbourgs*, pp. 63–64, 188–92. Although there is no clear indication that a particular feast day is specified, the scene has much in common with depictions in other manuscripts of the giving of gifts (étrennes) on 1 January: see Brigitte Buettner, "Past Presents: New Year's Gifts at the Valois Courts, ca. 1400," *Art Bulletin* 83 (2001), 598–625, at pp. 612–13.

13 On the heraldry cf. Colette Beaune, *The Birth of an Ideology: Myths and Symbols of Nation in Late-Medieval France* (English ed., Berkeley, 1991), pp. 201–25.

14 On the display of gold vessels see Jean-Pierre van Rijen, "Precious Metalwork in Gold Leaf: Everyday Lustre at the Court of Jean de Berry, as Depicted by the Limbourg Brothers," in *Nijmegen Masters*, ed. Dückers and Roelofs, pp. 165–78.

15 On these words identifying the tapestry scene as the Siege of Troy see Longnon and Cazelles, *Très Riches Heures*, commentary at fol. 2r; Meiss, *Limbourgs*, pp. 1.63–4 with 444 n. 269. So far as I know, the reading of the tiny letters has not been challenged in subsequent scholarship.

on behalf of their mentally ill nephew, King Charles VI of France. According to the historian known as the *Religieux de Saint-Denys*, Jean adorned the walls of the venue, a decrepit chapel, with tapestries depicting "various ancient battles" (antiqua et varia prelia).[16] On seeing these one of the English negotiators, the duke of Lancaster, objected that "those who seek peace should not have battles and the destructions of cities before their eyes," and Jean duly had them replaced with Gospel scenes. The episode is all the more striking for the fact that issues surrounding precedence and symbolism run through the whole of the *Religieux*'s account of the negotiations, affecting (for example) the choice of venue and the relative sizes and forms of the protagonists' tents. The story chimes well with a surviving illumination in a copy of Froissart's *Chronicles* from about 1470 which depicts the later fall of Richard II of England, ceremonially surrendering his crown to Henry Bolingbroke. Richard stands in front of a tapestry showing a confused infantry battle, while Henry stands in front of another tapestry decorated with trees and flowers, as if ushering in peace to replace the strife of his predecessor's reign.[17] All this encourages the working hypothesis that the significance of the Trojan scene in the hall shown in the *Très Riches Heures* illumination is more than merely decorative. How, then, are we to read it?

The Valois dynasty, of which Jean de Berry was at this time one of the three ruling princes, presided over a culture of power display and propaganda that was acted out not only in the royal courts of France but also those of the rivals to which they were linked by the usual mixture of kinship, alliance, and hostility—Naples, Burgundy, England, and even Hungary. In this period—roughly, from the time of John II (r. 1350–64) onward, but more fully from the time of his successor Charles V (r. 1364–80)—we see for the first time the institution of the secular courtly library, whose illuminated texts encode and enshrine the key discourses of power and identity.[18] Tapestry, however, was the ultimate pres-

16 See M.L. Bellaguet, ed., *Chronique du Réligieux de Saint-Denys contenant la règne de Charles VI*, 6 vols (Paris, 1840), vol. 2, pp. 76–79, at Bk. 14, c. 2, with discussion by Meiss, *Limbourgs*, p. 444 n. 271.

17 London, British Library, Harley 4380, fol. 184v, illustrated by Thomas P. Campbell, *Henry VIII and the Art of Majesty: Tapestries at the Tudor Court* (New Haven, 2007), p. 19. On the iconography of historical depiction in Froissart manuscripts in this period, see further Erik Inglis, *Jean Fouquet and the Invention of France: Art and Nation after the Hundred Years War* (New Haven, 2011), esp. pp. 69–104.

18 For the culture of royal book-collecting in this period, the best introduction is the case study of the collection of Richard II and Edward IV of England in the exhibition catalogue edited by Scot McKendrick, John Lowden, and Kathleen Doyle, *Royal Manuscripts: The Genius of Illumination* (London, 2011). For the French equivalent see Joyce Coleman, "Reading the evidence in text and image: how history was read in late medieval France,"

tige art form.[19] The combination of sumptuous colour and materials (including, vitally, gold thread), skilled and vastly labour-intensive manufacture, and endless flexibility of staging—tapestries could be taken down, moved, and rehung with ease—meant that they served as props whenever a lord's court was moved from one hall to another through his realm. Conditioned as we are to the smaller-scale aesthetics of the oil painting, it takes an effort of imagination to realize that the expansive scale of the tapestries, often as much as 30 feet in length, with the added strangeness of the combination in a single image of several busy scenes with multiple centres of interest and perspective, is not a matter of artistic naivety but an aspect of their communicative function, as a background against which courtly society was acted out.

2 Cultural Meanings of the Trojan War

At the first and simplest level, the Trojan War functions in our period as a charter of national origins.[20] If one looks in the tabular histories of nations that structure the great *Chronicle* of Eusebius-Jerome, the centrepiece of the historical bookshelf throughout the Middle Ages, the fall of Troy is the most prominently displayed event in all of ancient history: to trace one's origins to that moment is to occupy a definable place in the scheme of world time.[21] It is one of the great curiosities of European nation-building that the fundamental source for Trojan origins was a bogus eyewitness history of the war, the *De excidio Troiae*, which presents itself as a literal translation of an account written in Greek by Dares Phrygius, a minor combatant in the Homeric version.[22]

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in Elizabeth Morrison and Anne D. Hedeman, eds., *Imagining the Past in France: History in Manuscript Painting 1250–1500* (Los Angeles, 2010), pp. 53–68; and on the special case of the Burgundian variant of this cultural movement, see Marina Belozerskaya, *Rethinking the Renaissance: Burgundian Arts across Europe* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. pp. 67–75.

19 On the social function of tapestries in the late medieval court, see esp. Thomas P. Campbell, ed., *Tapestry in the Renaissance: Art and Magnificence*, exhibition catalogue (New York, 2002), pp. 13–28; Campbell, *Henry VIII*, pp. 3–64; for the case of Edward IV of England, see Scot McKendrick, "Edward IV: An English Royal Collector of Netherlandish Tapestry," *Burlington Magazine* 129 (1987), 521–24.

20 Useful overview by František Graus, "Troja und trojanische Herkunft im Mittelalter," in *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter*, ed. W. Ergräber (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 26–43; more complex explorations by Wolfram R. Keller, *Selves and Nations: The Troy Story from Sicily to England in the Middle Ages* (Heidelberg, 2008).

21 See R.W. Burgess, "Jerome Explained: An Introduction to his *Chronicle* and a Guide to Its Use," *Ancient History Bulletin* 16 (2002), 1–32.

22 The most up-to-date edition of the text is that by Emanuele Lelli, *Ditti di Creta: L'altra Iliade; il diario di guerra di un soldato greco con la storia della distruzione di Troia di Darete Frigio e i testi bizantini sulla Guerra Troiana* (Milan, 2016), pp. 200–42.

This text must have begun its life as a literary fiction, almost a 'Roman novel': it is an attempt to reimagine what might have been the down-to-earth realities of the war on which Homer would *later* build up his poetic fantasies.[23] Nonetheless we have no record of any time before the 16th century when it was not taken entirely seriously as a historical document, authored by the "first historian among the pagans," as Dares is called by Isidore in the *Etymologies*.[24]

In the early Middle Ages Dares's narrative, amplified by elements from the more extensive account said to be by Dictys of Crete, became the central source of authority for the 'facts' of the Trojan War. Already there were in circulation various versions of the claim that Trojans were the ancestors of the Frankish people. The most influential of these was in the text known as the *Chronicle of Fredegar*, which was composed as early as the mid-7th century but seems not to have circulated widely before the Carolingian period.[25] A Carolingian redactor added to it a new and spurious narrative entitled *Daretis Phrygii de origine Francorum*, marrying Dares's account of the war to an explanation of the sequence of events whereby fugitives from the fall of Troy became the ultimate ancestors of the Frankish people.[26] Related accounts, including that in the Neustrian version of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, embellished and variegated it so that the myth of the eponymous founder, Francus or Francio, became embedded in the canonical version of Frankish national history.[27]

A later stage in this process was the compilation of a synthetic text in the French language, the *Grandes Chroniques de France*, by the monk Primat and others at the abbey of Saint-Denis in the 1270s, at the end of the reign of King

23 See Frederic Clark, *The First Pagan Historian: The Fortunes of a Fraud from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2020), with Stefan Merkle, "The Truth and Nothing But the Truth: Dares and Dictys," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling (Leiden, 1996), pp. 563–80; Gerlinde Bretzigheimer, "Dares Phrygius: Transformationen des Trojanischen Kriegs," *Rheinisches Museum* 152 (2009), 63–95; id., " Dares Phrygius: Historia ficta, die Präliminarien zum Trojanischen Krieg," *Rheinisches Museum* 151 (2008), 365–99.

24 Isidore, *Etymologies* 1.42.1.

25 The standard edition of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* is Bruno Krusch, *Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici libri IV cum continuationibus*, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888). See Roger Collins, *Die Fredegar-Chroniken* (Hanover, 2007); on the reception and development of the legend in the Carolingian period see Richard A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 17–30.

26 See Krusch, *Chronicarum*, pp. 194–200.

27 The relevant section of the *Liber historiae Francorum* is translated by Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 173–74. For the Latin text see Krusch, *Chronicarum*, pp. 241–328. Cf. Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 14–22.

Louis IX.[28] They used the existing *Chronicle of Saint-Denis*, which had a version of the origin legend derived from the *Liber historiae Francorum*. The illuminated manuscripts of the *Grandes Chroniques*, the oldest of which is the copy originally presented to Louis's successor Philip III, constitute the authoritative sources for the national narrative that would be sanctioned by the Valois and enshrined in their court libraries, often with continuations added down to the reign of the current monarch.[29]

The Prologue of the *Grandes Chroniques* makes the following claim:

> Certaine chose est donques que les roys de France, par les quels le royaume est glorieus et renommé, descendirent de la noble ligniée de Troie. Glorieux furent en victoire, nobles en renommée, en la foy crestienne fervens et dévots : et bien que celle nacion soit forte et fière et cruele contre ses ennemis, selon que le nom le ségnifie, si est-elle miséricors et débonnaire vers ses subgets et vers cens que elle soumet par bataille. Car ils ne se combatoient pas anciennement tant pour accroistre leur royaume et leur seigneurie, comme ils faisoient pour aquerre la gloire de victoire.[30]

> It is therefore a certain thing that the kings of France, through whom the realm is glorious and renowned, are descended from the noble line of Troy. They were glorious in victory, noble in renown, fervent and devout in the Christian faith: and although this nation is strong and fierce and cruel against its enemies, according as the name [*sc.* Franci] signifies, still it is merciful and gentle towards its subjects and towards those that it overcomes in battle. For in ancient times they did not fight so much to increase their kingdom and lordship, as much as they did so to gain the glory of victory.

The chronicle proper shows that this opening is more than a mere rhetorical flourish.[31] It begins with the war of Troy—*Troie la grant*, named as in our tapestry—and the escape from the fall of the city of Aeneas, Antenor,

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28 Overview of creative historiography in the late 13th century and the narrative of origins: Gabrielle M. Spiegel at Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining*, pp. 43–52, and see further Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), pp. 195–212, esp. pp. 207–12.

29 On the iconographic programme of the manuscripts see Anne Dawson Hedeman, *The Royal Image: Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France* (Berkeley, 1991), passim, with eadem, "Translating Prologues and Prologue Illustration in French Historical Texts," in *Inscribing Knowledge in the Medieval Book: The Power of Paratexts*, ed. Rosalind Brown-Grant et al. (Berlin, 2019), pp. 197–223.

30 Paulin Paris, ed., *Les Grandes Chroniques de France, selon que elles sont conservées en l'église de Saint-Denis en France*, 6 vols (Paris, 1836), 1:3.

31 I summarize Paris, *Grandes Chroniques* 1.1–4, vol. 1 pp. 5–12.

and Helenus, from whom great nations arise: Aeneas founds the Roman people, Helenus founds a Greek lineage; Aeneas's great-grandson Brutus takes Britain—occupied up to then by giants—and founds the city *Trinovaque*, 'new Troy,' usually elsewhere identified with London; his descendants succeed him as kings of the land until they are supplanted by the Anglo-Saxon (here *Anglois*) invaders from Germany. Others among the fugitives from Troy are Francio, son of Hector, and Turcus son of Troilus, both therefore scions of the royal family of Priam. Turcus departs from Francio and goes to Scythia, there to become the father of peoples that we might recognize as Germanic: "Austroghotes, Ypoghotes, Wandes et Normans." Still following the Carolingian sources, the chronicle also specifies that the Macedonians were another branch of Francio's family, and thus that Philip and his son Alexander the Great are their kinsmen. Francio's people found a city Sicambria, from which they fight for the emperor Valentinian in his campaign to drive the barbarous Alans from the Maeotic marshes; he frees them in perpetuity from subjection to imperial tribute, and names them *Franci* because of their 'ferocity' or 'haughtiness,' *fierté*. They continue in their travels, terrifying the Romans and the Germans; arriving in what will become France, they found Lutetia. At first they are without kings, but monarchy is introduced after the arrival of another leader of Trojan blood, Marcomir. The Franks welcome him as their kinsman, and he teaches them the use of arms; his son Pharamond becomes the first king and the name of Lutetia is changed to Paris in memory of Paris of Troy.

In this story, elements of the version found in the *Liber historiae Francorum* have been rearranged and recontextualized to become the charter for a sense of nationhood tied specifically to the kingdom of France. The wealth of illuminated copies of the *Grandes Chroniques* shows that the text was carefully canonized and distributed as a validation of their regime: it is a fair guess, indeed, that the insecurity of the Valois claim on the throne was part of the motivation for this emphasis on the authoritative textualization of their ancestry.[32] The crucial example here is the display manuscript commissioned by Jean de Berry's brother, King Charles V.[33] The first illumination here (Fig. 8.2) is in four parts.

First, in the upper register we see the beginning of the Trojan War, the Greeks landing on the coast and investing the city; below, the fugitives led by Francio are founding the city of Sicambria, and (at lower right) they put the imperial army of Theodosius to flight, led by their king Pharamond who is already clad in the heraldry that we saw associated with the Valois in the Duc de Berry's December scene. So from the fall of Troy emerges the French nation and its

32 Hedeman, *Royal Image*, pp. 93–133.

33 MS Paris, BnF fr. 2813, fol. 4r. See Hedeman, *Royal Image*, pp. 99–101.

FIGURE 8.2 The *Grandes Chroniques*

royalty, a people fit from the start to assert themselves over the emperor. In the otherwise faithful copy of this miniature in the copy of the *Grandes Chroniques* made for the court library of Charles VI,[34] the 'Frenchness' of Troy is further signalled by fleur-de-lis finials on the turrets of the city.

34 Paris, BnF fr. 10135, fol. 3r.

The narrative of Trojan origins makes several implicit claims. It asserts that the origin of the French people is embedded among the great nations of Antiquity, and that they are peers and cousins of the imperial family of the Romans; it articulates a relationship of equality and kinship with the other contemporary nations claiming Trojan descent; and it also and incidentally asserts the *freedom* of the French from imperial domination. Vitally, however, it includes a theme that is not clearly enunciated in the Carolingian sources: the narrative is pinned specifically on the royalty and nobility of the people, and the charter is first and foremost a charter for the aristocracy that fights from horseback.

It is futile to ask whether the French of the late Middle Ages actually believed this origin legend: the best we can say is that it *could* be used as a source for politically potent messages. After the split among the Valois that brought about the establishment of the Burgundian court as a rival power, the Burgundians' order of chivalry was named after the Golden Fleece precisely because the Argonauts on the Quest of the Golden Fleece stopped off at Troy on the way and were insulted, in response to which Hercules returned and destroyed the city under its king, Priam's father Laomedon.[35] All known representations of the legend of Trojan origins from a French perspective treat it as a matter of historical fact, and even the proto-scientific accounts of early modern historians who attempted to cast doubt on the story—beginning with Eugène Pasquier as early as 1560[36]—remained isolated (and by definition anti-monarchical and subversive) until well into the 18th century,[37] yielding only gradually to a discourse that equated true French identity with the Gauls whom the invading Franks had conquered.[38]

3 The Origins of Chivalry

However, what we have seen so far is only part of the myth's meaning. In the medieval reception of the Trojan War there is another strand, distinct from the 'origin of nations' strand culminating in the *Grandes Chroniques*, which

35 See Beaune, *Birth*, pp. 230–31, for the argument that the emblem of the Fleece was an implicit warning to Charles VII of France.

36 Eugène Pasquier, *Recherches de la France* 1.53–5 (1566), cited by Huppert (see next note), p. 233, and cf. Spiegel, *Past as Text*, p. 280 n. 1, with further refs.

37 A classic treatment of the early modern historiography remains George Huppert, "The Trojan Franks and Their Critics," *Studies in the Renaissance* 12 (1965), 227–41; see also Wolfgang Brückle, "Noblesse oblige. Trojasage und legitime Herrschaft in der französischen Staatstheorie des späten Mittelalters," in *Genealogie als Denkform in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. Kilian Heck and Bernhard Jahn (Tübingen, 2000), pp. 39–65.

38 Cf. Ian Wood, *The Modern Origins of the Early Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2013).

has little to do with ancestry and everything to do with chivalry: specifically, the ethical and psychological struggles of noble warriors. This story begins two centuries before Jean de Berry's time, and emerges from the ferment of multilingual text-production associated with the courts of the Angevin king Henry II of England and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine.[39] The legend of Trojan origins was repeatedly reworked among this textual community.[40] The crucial first example is Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae* in Latin prose, which picks up the story (originally from Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*) that the British race was founded by Brutus the descendant of Aeneas. This was followed by Wace's *Roman de Brut* in French verse and Layamon's in English alliterative verse. Equally characteristic of this literary movement, but nowadays much less known, is the Latin epic produced around the same time by Joseph of Exeter, an associate of Baldwin the future archbishop of Canterbury.[41] In this poem, known in its own time as *Frigii Daretis Ylias*—the *Iliad of Dares Phrygius*—the focus is more ethical than ethnic, when Joseph takes the bare bones of Dares's narrative and builds it up into 11,000 lines of hexameter epic verse on the Trojan War, composed in a highly allusive variety of classicizing Latin. Analogous in spirit and conception, but utterly different in its superficial

39 See John Gillingham, "The Cultivation of History, Legend and Courtesy at the Court of Henry II," in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (New York, 2006), pp. 25–52. Note, however, that where compositions in French (rather than Latin) are concerned, the evidence for the patronage of Henry and Eleanor is weaker than is sometimes assumed: see Karen M. Broadhurst, "Henry II of England and Eleanor of Aquitaine: Patrons of Literature in French?," *Viator* 27 (1996), 53–84.

40 See the useful overview by Lesley Johnson and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "National, World and Women's History: Writers and Readers in Post-Conquest England," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 92–121, with Francis Ingledew, "The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: the Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Speculum* 69 (1994), 665–704; cf. more widely Jan M. Ziolkowski, "Cultures of Authority in the Long Twelfth Century," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 108 (2009), 421–48; Kordula Wulf, *Troja – Metamorphosen eines Mythos: Französische, englische und italienische Überlieferungen des 12. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich* (Berlin, 2009).

41 The best introduction to Joseph of Exeter and his work is that provided by A.K. Bate, ed. and trans., *Joseph of Exeter*: *Bellum Troianum Books I–III* (Liverpool, 1986). See also Francine Mora-Lebrun, "Joseph of Exeter: Troy through Dictys and Dares," in *Brill's Companion to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings*, ed. Simms, pp. 115–33. The standard edition of the whole poem is Ludwig Gompf, ed., *Josephus Iscanus: Werke und Briefe* (Leiden, 1970), which can be used with the excellent verse translation of the entire poem by A.G. Rigg, available online at https://medieval.utoronto.ca/ylias/web-content/JOSEPH%20OF%20EXETER.pdf, last accessed 26 August 2019.

contours, is the *Roman de Troie* of Benoît de Sainte-Maure,[42] which recasts Dares into French verse in the style of chivalric romance that was emerging in the same generation in the Arthurian works of Chrétien de Troyes. The *Roman de Troie* is by far the most complex of the three Old French poems on ancient subjects that have become known as the *romans d' antiquité*.[43] The other two major *romans d'antiquité* composed in this generation, the *Roman de Thèbes* and the *Roman d' Éneas*, deal respectively with the war of Thebes and the journeyings of Aeneas. Together, these three works depict the wars of ancient Graeco-Roman heroism in a mode closely aligned with that of the Arthurian and Charlemagne cycles, so that they become evocations of a single world of warlike ethics, conflicting loyalties, and erotic tension that is simultaneously ancient and contemporary, heroic and knightly.

Benoît's method, essentially the same as that of Joseph, was to take each event in the sequence of Dares's history and to expand and reimagine it, with long purple patches of description and extended speeches of complex rhetoric; he supplied missing details from Dictys or occasionally from other works in the standard classical library of his time, and also added elements of pure imagination—for example the centaur or Sagittary who comes to aid the Trojans in their war, the tragic love triangle between Diomedes, Troilus, and Cressida, and the great monument erected to Hector after his death. But the name of Dares remains vital to the project: Benoît constantly refers this or that detail back to the "History of Dares" in which he found it, and in his Preface he claims disingenuously to have included nothing not found in Dares except occasional "things well said" (bons dits).[44] The name of the eyewitness historian remains as the token of authenticity, even while the story is taking on new and often entirely imaginary contours.

Benoît's work dominated subsequent articulations of the matter of Troy in French, and was rewritten at least five times over in prose, each time purporting to be an unvarnished history of the war, with the decorative embellishments

42 The standard edition by Léopold Constans, *Le Roman de Troie par Benoît de Sainte-Maure*, 6 vols (Paris, 1904–12), can now be explored with the help of the translation in Glyn S. Burgess and Douglas Kelly, *The Roman de Troie by Benoît de Sainte-Maure* (Cambridge, 2017).

43 Francine Mora-Lebrun, *"Mettre en romanz": les romans d'antiquité du XIIe siècle et leur posterité (XIIIe–XIVe siècle)* (Paris, 2008); see also the overview by D.H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 153–68. The essays in Emmanuèle Baumgartner and Laurence Harf-Lancner, eds., *Entre fiction et histoire: Troie et Rome au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1997), came to my notice too late to be used in this chapter.

44 *Roman de Troie* 142.

expunged but the invented episodes retained as bogus elements of the 'true' eyewitness narrative. In this form it was incorporated into the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*, another of the key canonical texts in the courtly libraries of the francophone world.[45] The proliferation of translations of Benoît into other languages, including even Byzantine Greek, is beyond the scope of the present study; more significant for our purposes is the move taken in the late 13th century when Guido de Columnis, a Sicilian associated with the Angevin court at Naples, turned Benoît's epic back into Latin prose, making a new pseudo-history of the war in which this "fictive hyper-realism" is stretched to new extremes.[46] Guido in his own preface makes a claim much more bold than Benoît's: he explains that the transmitted version of Dares was unsatisfactorily brief because the ancient discoverer of the work, Cornelius Nepos, had omitted much of what Dares actually wrote, so that Guido is now reinserting what had been lost. In point of fact there is little in Guido that is not an expanded and variegated mutation of stories in the *Roman*: but the work's claim to historical veracity seems always to have been accepted—there are at least 150 manuscripts of the Latin text, and in the original or in French, English, and other vernacular translations it became the standard account right into the print era.

It was in this way that Guido's became the authoritative 'history of Troy' in the courtly libraries of the late 14th and 15th centuries.[47] Fortuitously, much detailed knowledge of Jean de Berry's possessions, including his library, exists in the form of three inventories made at various times before and after his death. The final (1416) inventory includes many books in both French and Latin on ancient history and mythology, alongside numerous copies of the *Grandes Chroniques* and the work of Vincent of Beauvais, and it includes six copies of the history of Troy.[48] One of them is even named with the words *Troye la grant*, the same formula as in the tapestry depicted in the *Très Riches Heures*,[49] and

45 For the text see Jung, *Légende* pp. 358–405, 505–26. On the reach and influence of the *Histoire ancienne* see Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *Romancing the Past: The Rise of Vernacular Prose Historiography in Thirteenth-Century France* (Berkeley, 1993), pp. 99–151. Part of the first recension is edited by Marijke de Visser-van Terwisga, *Histoire ancienne jusqu' à César* (*Estoires Rogier*), 2 vols (Orléans, 1995–99), but much remains unpublished (see Spiegel in Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining*, p. 46 with p. 51 n. 15).

46 The standard edition by Nathaniel Edward Griffin, ed., Guido de Columnis, *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (Cambridge, MA, 1936) is translated by Mary Elizabeth Meek as Guido delle Colonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (Bloomington, 1974). Among the few recent studies of this work see esp. Keller, *Selves*, pp. 192–209.

47 For versions of Guido rewritten as French prose see Jung, *Légende*, pp. 563–601.

48 See Meiss, *Limbourgs*, p. 64 with notes, giving references to Jules Guiffrey, ed., *Inventaires de Jean Duc de Berry*, 2 vols (Paris, 1894–96), which remains the standard edition.

49 Meiss, *Limbourgs*, p. 64 with p. 444 n. 270, citing Guiffrey, *Inventaires*, 1:237, no. 912.

another is recorded as the gift of Martin Gouge, bishop of Chartres, who has been independently identified in the January scene as the cleric in white and purple (crimson, as it now appears to our eyes) who gestures from the end of the table.[50] The books listed in the inventory include copies of Benoît and the opening sections of the *Histoire ancienne*,[51] but there is every reason to guess that others more vaguely named were translations of Guido de Columnis into French, perhaps forerunners of the surviving copy illuminated by Jean Colombe at Bourges in the late 1490s.[52]

4 The Nine Worthies

All this encourages a different reading of our tapestry: it now becomes a symbol of the lord's participation in the elite military culture of chivalry. Seen in this perspective, another manifestation of the romance recreation of ancient heroism becomes vital. From the *Voeux du Paon*, a verse narrative composed around 1312 around a fictive interlude in the exploits of Alexander the Great, came the scheme known as the Nine Worthies (*Neuf Preux*): nine great heroes of world history, divided into three groups.[53] From pagan Antiquity are Hector, Alexander the Great, and Julius Caesar; from the Old Testament David, Joshua, and Judas Maccabaeus; from the Christian era Arthur, Charlemagne, and Godfrey de Bouillon, the first Crusader king of Jerusalem. One could in fact present all six of the non-biblical heroes as members of the royal lineage of Troy, and thus intimately related to the Valois; in practice, however, the essential

50 Meiss, *Limbourgs*, p. 444 n. 271, citing Guiffrey, *Inventaires*, 1:245, no. 947.

51 For example MS Paris, BnF 256, which Guiffrey identifies with the item described in the 1416 inventory as an account of the aftermath of the Trojan War (*Inventaires*, 1:241, no. 925, with discussion at p. 1.clxviii), is now listed in the online catalogue of the library as a version of the *Histoire ancienne*.

52 See Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining*, pp. 255–57.

53 For an excellent introduction to the Nine Worthies and the *Voeux du Paon* see Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining*, pp. 305–08, with Hélène Bellon-Méguelle, *Du Temple de Mars à la chambre de Vénus* (Paris, 2008), emphasizing the courtly ludic and performative themes of the work. The verses on the Nine are edited with commentary by Glynnis M. Cropp, "Les vers sur les Neuf Preux," *Romania* 120 (2002), 449–82, and are also available at R.L. Graeme Ritchie, ed., *The Buik of Alexander by John Barbour*, 6 vols (Edinburgh, 1921–29), pp. 402–06, ll. 7484–7579. On the thematics of the catalogue see also Anne Salamon, "Les neuf preux entre édification et glorification," *Questes* 13 (2008), 38–52. I know of no modern English translation, but Ritchie prints in parallel the Scots translation in the *Buik of Alexander* ascribed to the 14th-century poet John Barbour.

idea of the Nine was their status as paragons of knightly excellence, *prouesse*.[54] Although in the *Voeux du Paon* the Nine are cited rhetorically, as *exempla* to amplify the heroic excellence of the famed Indian prince, Porus, the original context was quickly forgotten and the list took on a life of its own in the literature and art of chivalry, a significant part of the tradition being the heraldic blazon of each Worthy's coat of arms.[55]

Parts survive of a set of monumental tapestries depicting the Nine, which may be the same as (or associated with) the tapestries of the Nine Worthies listed in one of the inventories of Jean de Berry's possessions.[56] All this suggests that the Trojan paradigm is serving as an image of knightly and aristocratic idealism and thus, potentially, of political and military excellence.

5 The Grenier Tapestries

There is abundant archival evidence for Trojan War tapestries owned and displayed by the kings and aristocrats of the Valois and their peers.[57] As early as

54 See for example the invocation of the nine male and nine female Worthies in the poem of Eustache Deschamps, "Venez a moy, li hault prince ancien" (E. Deschamps, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. the Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire, vol. 1 (Paris, 1878), no. 93, pp. 199–201). Cf. Tania van Hemelryck, "Où sont les Neuf Preux? Variations sure un thème médiéval," *Studi Francesi* 124 (1998), 1–8.

55 On the arms of the Nine Worthies, the fundamental article remains Roger Sherman Loomis, "The heraldry of Hector or confusion worse confounded," *Speculum* 42 (1967), 32–35, with R.A. Dwyer, "The Heraldry of Hector and Its Antiquity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 34 (1971), 325–26. See also Morrison and Hedeman, *Imagining*, p. 310 n. 8.

56 Parts of this set of tapestries, reconstructed after mutilation, are in the Cloisters collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. They cannot be the actual set listed in the Duc de Berry inventory (Guiffrey, *Inventaires*, 2:209, no. 17), as those are described as having gold thread. On the other hand, the coat of arms of Jean de Berry appears several times on the banners flying from the turrets, and those of other senior Valois appear elsewhere. It is a possibility that the surviving set is another, less sumptuously produced, weave of the set that is listed in the inventory. The authoritative study of the iconography and provenance of the tapestries, with an assessment of the earlier literature on the question of their relationship to those in the Jean de Berry inventory, is Adolfo Salvatore Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1993), pp. 94–124.

57 In this discussion I draw largely on the seminal article by Scot McKendrick, "The Great History of Troy: A Reassessment of the Development of a Secular Theme in Late Medieval Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 54 (1991), 43–82; Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, pp. 229–49; Campbell, *Renaissance*, pp. 41–49, 55–64; Campbell, *Henry VIII*. The earlier study by Jean-Paul Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries tournaisiennes de la Guerre de Troie," *Revue belge d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'art* 39 (1970), 93–182, remains useful

1364, there is a record of tapestries of the *Golden Apple* and a large *Destruction of Troy* in the collection of Jean de Berry's brother Louis, king of Naples and duke of Anjou, and similar titles are recorded (for example) for those owned in the following decades by their brothers Philip the Bold, duke of Burgundy and Charles VI of France, and likewise by Richard II and Edward IV of England and senior aristocrats associated with each.[58] Our knowledge of these tapestries is almost entirely secondary, based on inventories and written records, but the range of direct evidence widens dramatically if we pursue it into the succeeding generations of the 15th century. Before 1471 an exceptionally ambitious and complex series of tapestries of the Trojan War was produced under the Tournai merchant Pasquier Grenier, and a set (presumably the first) was acquired by Charles the Bold, duke of Burgundy and (incidentally) Jean de Berry's great-great-nephew.[59] Other weaves of the same set were exported, and there is direct or indirect evidence for their presence at the courts of Henry VII, king of England, Charles VIII, king of France, Matthias Corvinus of Hungary, Federico da Montefeltro of Urbino, and Lodovico il Moro Sforza, duke of Milan—a potent reminder of the role of narrative tapestries as representations of the international mythology of princely society.

Numerous complete tapestries and fragments survive from this series, as well as copies from lost examples and, remarkably, a series of coloured drawings believed to be the models (*petits patrons*) from which the weavers worked.[60] Because the tapestries—like their fictive predecessor in the *Très Riches Heures*—carry inscriptions in banderoles, we are in a position to listen to something of how they might have been interpreted in their time. When read in this way, and against the background of the works of Guido de Columnis and Benoît de Sainte-Maure that are their ultimate sources, a third meaning emerges. The story of the fall of Troy becomes much more than simply an image of glorious ancestry or a paradigm of chivalry: it is also and more obviously a depiction of the dangers that follow when sexual passion and the pursuit of aristocratic self-interest make the knightly class act against the best interests of the people.[61] At the time our tapestries were made, this theme was

for the banderole inscriptions but is not always reliable on the visual iconography of the tapestries.

58 McKendrick, "Great History," pp. 44–49. For the English collectors see also Campbell, *Renaissance*, pp. 3–64.

59 On the manufacture of this set of Trojan War tapestries and their presentation to Charles the Bold, see McKendrick, "Great History," at pp. 49–50.

60 The drawings are attributed to the artist known as the Coëtivy Master (McKendrick, "Great History," pp. 63–64).

61 I draw here on the classic treatment by Beaune, *Birth*, pp. 226–44.

not a new one, and it had been articulated by many poets in the aftermath of the disasters of the early 15th century—first the destructive quarrel between Armagnac and Burgundian factions during the madness of Charles VI, then the humiliations of the later years of the Hundred Years War and the occupation of Paris by the English. Reflecting on these disasters, the poet Robert Blondel would articulate a warning:

> Troja perusta jacet, Helenam Paridi rapiente,
> famose sobolis scutis Priami clipeata;
> Parisiusque vide ne fias altera Troja.[62]
> Troy lies burnt to the ground, because Paris stole Helen,
> though defended by the shields of the famous offspring of Priam;
> Now, (city of) Paris, take care that you do not become a second Troy.

Although this poem seems to have been first written in Latin, it circulated widely in French translation, and the *Troja* of this passage was rendered again as *Troie la grant*, Troy the Great.[63]

In the tapestries, correspondingly, the punctuating events of the story all turn on the conflict between passion and duty. The first tapestry begins with the Greeks' refusal to return to the Trojans Hesione, the princess whom Hercules had seized in an earlier attack;[64] Paris's dream of the three goddesses follows, with disastrous consequences in the second tapestry:[65] Paris, "ardens in furias"—blazing into fury—persuades his father to allow him to seize Helen from the Trojans in retaliation. As he gathers the army, already Cassandra, the prophetess whom all ignore, is wailing for the fall of the city,[66]

> … dont Cassandra dolente et esploree
> Ahaulte voix plaignoit le dur exil
> Lui fortune mauditte et maleuree
> Dung tant grant lieu plantureux et fertil.

62 *Liber de Complanctu bonorum omnium* 280–82 in Robert Blondel, *Oeuvres de Robert Blondel, Historien Normand du XVe Siècle*, ed. A. Héron (Rouen, 1891–3), vol. 1, p. 13. The poem is referred to by Beaune, *Birth*, p. 229, but the text is misrepresented in the English translation of her book. The second line of the Latin here is rather obscure, and my rendering is guided by the contemporary French version (see next note).

63 Blondel, *Oeuvres*, p. 79, l. 757.

64 Inscriptions of the first tapestry: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 102–03.

65 Second tapestry: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 103–05.

66 I am grateful to Catherine Emerson for help with these translations.

> … of which Cassandra, grieving and tear-stained
> In a loud voice laments the harsh ruin,
> The accursed and miserable fortune
> Of a place so great, flourishing, and fertile.

Among the battles that spread across the following tapestries, none is more significant in this context than the scene in the fifth tapestry of the failed negotiations between Hector and Achilles, in which the two sides fail to make an agreement for a duel between the two champions that would end the war.[67]

FIGURE 8.3 Detail of the eighth tapestry in the Trojan War series, showing the death of Achilles

67 Fifth tapestry: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 111–13: see esp. §2 of the Latin and French verses, further discussed by Cavallo, *Medieval Tapestries*, pp. 237–38.

The eighth tapestry (Fig. 8.3) in turn shows the disastrous consequences of uncontrolled passion on Achilles himself: filled with desire for the Trojan princess Polyxena, he is lured unarmed to the temple of Apollo with the secret promise that she will be given to him in marriage in return for betraying his people, and he is there ambushed by Paris and his followers.[68] The tenth tapestry shows how Aeneas and Antenor, who had pleaded among the Trojans for peace and were therefore threatened with death, respond by surrendering the sacred statue called the Palladium and thus betraying the city to the enemy.[69]

In the eleventh and final tapestry are shown the horrors of the final sack of the city, the execution of Polyxena on the grave of Achilles, and the murder of Priam by his son Achilles.[70] The French verses sum up the horrors of its fall:

> Les grecs faisant horrible et inhumaine
> Occision destruirent la cite
> De la grant Troye renomme et haultaine.
> Ylion ont abatu et gaste
> Et la ville ardirent excepte
> Que des traistres les hostels reserverent.
> Andromata Cassandra ont garde
> Troye destruite en Grece retrounerent.
>
> Ainsi fine listoire miserable
> De la cite digne de grant renom,
> Troies la grant tant noble et honorable
> De tant grant bruit de tant excellent nom
> De tant grant lor de tant grant mencion
> Tant richement tant puissament construite
> Autorisee par dominacion
> Jadis en fleur or apresent detruite.
>
> Carrying out terrible and inhuman
> Killing, the Greeks destroyed the city
> Of great Troy, renowned and mighty.
> They tore down and wasted Ylion
> And burned down the city, except
> That they set aside the palaces of the traitors.

68 Seventh and eighth tapestries: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 112–18. For an updated account of the eighth tapestry see Campbell, *Renaissance*, pp. 55–64.

69 Tenth tapestry: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 120–23.

70 Eleventh tapestry: Asselberghs, "Les tapisseries," pp. 123–28.

They took Andromeda and Cassandra prisoner;
With Troy destroyed, they returned to Greece.

So ends the miserable history
Of the city worthy of great renown,
Troy the great, so noble and honourable,
Of such great fame, of such excellent name,
Of such great praise [?], of such great repute,
So richly, so powerfully built,
Justified by its supremacy,
Formerly in flower, but nowadays destroyed.

Despite the richness, even the glamour, of the scenes depicted, the message of the verse inscriptions has nothing to do with the celebration of ancient warriorhood, nor do they make any allusion to ancestry and the charters of social authority. The "traitors" referred to are again Aeneas and Antenor, who according to Dares betrayed their people for the promise of safe passage into exile. Here the fall of Troy is a warning: a warning against the selfish passions of the kings and nobles on both sides of the war, and ultimately of the potential for self-destructive and reckless behaviour among the contemporary elites whom they resemble in dress and bearing, and who exercised their social and political power against the visible backdrop of such tapestries.

6 Conclusion

In these extraordinary images Dares Phrygius is present throughout, both intertextually and personally—is he the figure in a little niche at the right-hand side of the final tapestry, observing all and writing up his book?—but the exemplary significance of the narratives built on his account has changed unrecognizably, it seems, since his name was first used to lend authority to the Frankish claim to Trojan origins. The fall of Troy begins as the stuff of epic in the earlier medieval schoolroom; it becomes first a charter of origins, then an expression of elite military status, finally a caution to the follies of noblemen and cities—and, potentially, all four meanings may be alive at once for a culturally literate audience in our period. If "a myth consists of all its versions," in the classic formulation of Lévi-Strauss,[71] the case of our chronicles and tapestries shows how radically the ethical and political meaning of one

71 Claude Lévi-Strauss, "The Structural Study of Myth," *Journal of American Folklore* 68 (1955), 428–44.

centrally important myth can change in the course of a continuous process of transmission and renewal.[72]

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CHAPTER 9

Fallen Angels and the Island Paradise

Catherine E. Karkov

Literary historians have explored the prominence of early English origin myths such as the exodus or migration myth and the trope of the fallen angels as they were developed in the promotion of both the English as an exceptional people and the island that they settled as an exceptional place from the 8th century on.[1] These same myths appear in multiple forms in illuminated manuscripts of the late 10th and 11th centuries such as the Junius 11 *Genesis* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Junius 11) or the New Minster Charter of 966 (London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian A.viii; see Figure. 9.1 below). There has been almost no discussion of English origin myths as they appear in earlier art, yet they are there albeit in subtle and/or symbolic form. The 8th-century Franks Casket, for example, assembles stories of migration, travel over water, exile, and exceptional beings from the Christian, Roman, polytheistic, and Germanic traditions that lay behind the Anglo-Saxons' real or imagined conception of their origins. Moreover, it does so through the medium of whalebone, the remains of a creature that travelled across the sea before landing, like the Anglo-Saxons, on the island's shore.[2]

The exodus myth in particular has received extensive attention, so this essay will focus instead on the idea of the island of Britain as a promised land and the Anglo-Saxon settlers as not only a chosen people, but an exceptional people who were closer to the angels than any other, and who thus imagined themselves as the rightful inhabitants of the island they colonized, a living paradise that was a mirror of the earthly paradise. Gildas described Britain as being

> like a chosen bride arrayed in a variety of jewellery … decorated with wide plains and agreeably set hills, excellent for vigorous agriculture, and

1 See e.g. Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, 1999); Kathy Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World: Geography, Literature, and English Community 1000–1534* (Ithaca, 2006); Lynn Staley, *The Island Garden: England's Language of Nation from Gildas to Marvell* (Notre Dame, IN, 2012).

2 See Catherine E. Karkov, "The Franks Casket Speaks Back: The Bones of the Past, the Becoming of England," in *Postcolonising the Medieval Image*, ed. Eva Frojmovic and Catherine E. Karkov (Farnham, 2017), pp. 37–61; Catherine E. Karkov, *Imagining Anglo-Saxon England: Utopia, Heterotopia, Dystopia* (Woodbridge, 2020), chap. 2.

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FIGURE 9.1 Frontispiece to the new minster charter, copyright the British Library board

> mountains especially suited to varying the pasture for animals. Flowers of different hues underfoot made them a delightful picture. To water it, the island has clear fountains, whose constant flow drives before it pebbles white as snow, and brilliant rivers that glide with gentle murmur, guaranteeing sweet sleep for those who lie on their banks, and lakes flowing over with a cold rush of living water.[3]

For Gildas Britain was a lost Eden, a ruined garden, a land made waste by those Britons who had abandoned God and had thus brought the settlement of their

3 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Documents*, ed. and trans. Michael Winterbottom (London, 1978), pp. 16–17.

former land by the Anglo-Saxons upon themselves. For him, the Anglo-Saxons were not a chosen people but dogs or wolves, and their Continental homeland was a land that spewed out "wolfish offspring."[4] The special nature of the Anglo-Saxons has its written origins in 7th- or 8th-century Northumbria in the well-known story of pope Gregory the Great's encounter with a group of Deiran boys in the Roman market recorded by both the author of the Whitby *Life of Gregory the Great* and by Bede in his *Historia ecclesiastica*. Gregory was struck by the appearance of the boys, especially their fair faces and gracefulness ("lucidi uultus … gratia frontispicii").[5] He asked the boys who they were and where they came from and when he learned that they were *Angli* he began his Latin-English wordplay by turning them into *angeli*. : "'Good', he said, 'they have the face of angels, and such men should be fellow-heirs of the angels in heaven.'"[6] Like the island they inhabited, the Anglo-Saxons were fallen yet angelic and were thus worthy to inhabit a paradise. By the end of the 9th century, the *Angli* and the place they inhabited would become one and the same: *Angelcynn*.

The special nature of the Anglo-Saxons' chosen island home is captured in the description of the island with which the *Historia ecclesiastica* begins.

> The island is rich in crops and trees, and has good pasturage for cattle and beasts of burden. It also produces vines in certain districts and has plenty of both land- and waterfowl of various kinds. It is remarkable too for its rivers, which abound in fish, particularly salmon and eels, and for copious springs. Seals as well as dolphins are frequently captured and even whales; besides them are various kinds of shellfish, among which are mussels, and enclosed in these are often found excellent pearls of every colour, red and purple, violet and green, but mostly white.[7]

4 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and other Documents*, pp. 26–27.

5 Bede. *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), p. 132.

6 "At ille: 'Bene' inquit; 'nam et angelicam habent faciem, et tales angelorum in caelis decet esse coheredes.'" Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 2.1, pp. 134–35. The connection between Angles and angels is perhaps more explicit in the Whitby version (which predates Bede's account). Here the boys tell Gregory that that are Angli, to which he responds simply "Angels of God" (*Angeli Dei*), before going on to a more extended wordplay on the name of their king and kingdom. See Bertram Colgrave, ed. and trans., *The Earliest Life of Gregory the Great* (Cambridge, 1968), pp. 90–91.

7 "Opima frugibus atque arboribus insula, et alendis apta pecoribus ac iumentis, uineas etiam quibusdam in locis germinans, sed et auium ferax terra marique generis diuersi, fluuiis quoque multum piscosis ac fontibus praeclara copiosis; et quidem praecipue issicio abundat et anguilla. Capiuntur autem saepissime et uituli marini et delfines nec non et ballenae, exceptis uariorum generibus concyliorum, in quibis sunt et musculae, quibus inclusam saepe magaritam omnis quidem coloris optimam inueniunt, id est et rubicundi et purpurei et hyacinthini et prasini sed maxime candidi." Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 1.1, pp. 14–15.

Bede also embeds a Christian paradisiacal identity into the pre-Christian landscape through place names such as Heavenfield, site of the 633/34 battle in which Oswald of Northumbria defeated the allegedly pagan Cadwallon of Gwynedd.

Bede's description of the island is based on those of earlier writers including Pliny, Solinus, Orosius, and Gildas, but it incorporates enough detail and what seem to be features observed in the actual landscape around him to make it utterly believable to a contemporary reader. While Bede may not be the ultimate source, the cataloguing of abundant natural resources would become a characteristic means through which settler colonial nations justified themselves in the modern world. The availability of fertile land with its potential for productivity and exploitation and promise of future wealth was one of the characteristic justifications and/or motivations for settler colonialism.[8] The construction of the island of Britain as a kind of earthly paradise garden was materialized in the landscape through the proliferation of free-standing stone crosses decorated with floral and foliate designs, especially vine-scrolls, and especially in the north, from the 7th or 8th century onwards. Its ultimate expression, however, may well be in the 11th-century world map on folio 56 verso of the London, British Library, Cotton Tiberius B.v manuscript. The map locates Britain at one edge of the world, while the island of Taprobane (Sri Lanka), also known for its legendary abundance, sits at the other.[9] While the idea that Britain was located at the edge of the known, and hence mappable, world might have made it seem marginal, this position of marginality was turned into a recentring of the world around the island. This was achieved through language in the first instance, through such details as Bede's both embedding into the landscape the name Heavenfield—the English coming before the Latin (*Caelestis Campus*)—as well as through the story of Gregory and the Deiran boys in which, as Gregory discovered, the divine was already embedded in the language and names for its people and places.[10] On the Cotton map the shape of the island is expanded and repeated in the shape of Continental Europe above it and beyond that in the shape of the land mass that includes Africa, India, and Asia. England's place on the edge made it exceptional and positioned it quite literally at the edge of the known and the unknown, the mappable and

8 Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 1 (2012), 1–40, at p. 6.

9 An image of the map is available at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Tiberius_B_V/1. Accessed 29 July 2019.

10 Uppinder Mehan and David Townsend, "'Nation' and the Gaze of the Other in Eighth-Century Northumbria," *Comparative Literature* 53, no. 1 (2001), 1–26.

the other world beyond it. This liminal position, as Kathy Lavezzo has documented, was to lay the foundations for later English expansion and empire.

> Built into the myth of a sublime English frontier was a related imperial dream. If their otherworldliness made the English exceptional, their exceptionalism might also suggest how the English should be the rightful masters of the earth itself. The exaltation of the English world margin, in other words, could authorize the expansion of England beyond its borders in the world.[11]

Lavezzo is writing about a later period in history, but the idea that England, its location, people, and language, were special clearly formed a part of the way in which the English thought of themselves from as early as the 7th century.[12]

As noted above, it was during the 8th century that Bede's vision of England as a paradise took material form in the sculpted and painted crosses that covered the landscape, most especially in Bede's own kingdom of Northumbria. What made these sculptures particularly rich symbols of the precise idea of a Christian paradise was the lush vine-scroll ornament that covered so many of their shafts (and sometimes heads and arms). To be sure, the opening initial B to the *c.*750 St Petersburg Bede (Russian National Library, MS Lat Q.V.I 18) encloses lush blooming vine-scroll and foliate ornament that is similar to that seen on free-standing sculpted stone crosses such as Acca's Cross (Figure 9.2), and similar, though more abstract,[13] types of vine-scroll, or elements of it, could be seen on the pages of manuscripts such as the Lindisfarne Gospels (London, British Library, Cotton Nero D.iv), or the surfaces of altar or processional crosses such as the 8th-century Bischofshovan (or Rupertus) Cross preserved in the Cathedral Treasury in Salzburg, but these objects were not part of the landscape and thus could not evoke the idea of growth in, or of a particular place as, a paradise garden anywhere nearly as effectively. The monasteries in which the crosses were carved and displayed were the spiritual deserts, while the crosses themselves created a mystical garden that grew from the rock on which the monasteries were founded. In Northumbria in particular vine-scroll

11 Lavezzo, *Angels on the Edge of the World*, p. 21.

12 The author of the Whitby life of Gregory states that s/he is writing while Ælfflæd was abbess, so during the period 680–714, hence possibly during the 7th century. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* was not completed until 731.

13 Meyer Schapiro, "The Decoration of the Leningrad Manuscript of Bede," Scriptorium 12 (1958), 191–207, at pp. 193–96; Catherine A.M. Clarke, *Literary Landscapes and the Idea of Early England, 700–1400* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 9.

FIGURE 9.2
Acca's cross, Hexham Abbey

became a central component of the monuments that mapped the spread of the Northumbrian church and kingdom.

The wooden cross raised by King Oswald before the 633/34 battle and preserved at Heavenfield was a mystical tree, and it has been suggested that the Roman altar reused and partially recarved in the 7th century with a bit of Northumbrian vine-scroll might have served as its base—or as the base of another early Anglo-Saxon cross (Figures 9.3a–b).[14] Both the wood of Oswald's

14 The altar, subsequently reused as a baptismal font, remains in the church of St Oswald-in-Lee, Heavenfield.

cross and the soil on which he was eventually killed in battle at Maserfelth (later Oswestry, Oswald's tree or cross) near the Welsh border worked miracles, as recorded by Bede. The spot on which Oswald died was "greener and more beautiful than the rest of the field."[15] As both the preserved and reused monument and the events at and names and associations of the two sites suggested, place mattered.

Most of the stone used in the early Northumbrian monasteries was either quarried locally of reused from earlier Roman or sub-Roman settlements and monuments. It was thus specific to and spoke of place. One of the earliest,

FIGURE 9.3A
Roman altar reused as an Anglo-Saxon cross-base, church of St Oswald-in-Lee, Heavenfield

15 "cetro campo uiridius ac uenustius," Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, pp. 244–45.

FIGURE 9.3B Detail from a Roman altar reused as an Anglo-Saxon cross-base, church of St Oswald-in-Lee, Heavenfield

most beautifully carved, and elegant of Northumbria's crosses is the so-called Acca's Cross that now stands inside the parish church of St Andrew at Hexham (Figure 9.2). The cross is believed to date from the second quarter of the 8th century, and may always have stood inside a church, or at least in a very sheltered position, as it shows very few signs of weathering. Its name comes from an erroneous identification of the cross as the one that stood over the grave of Bishop Acca (d. 740), but a number of stone crosses of similar date survive from Hexham so there is no reason to identify this one as Acca's. Three sides of the cross are decorated with very finely carved continuous vine-scrolls in which intricately entwined vines form medallions that enclose ripe bunches of grapes. The fourth side bears a heavily damaged inscription that is still partially legible, and in which the words "unigenito filio dei" (the only begotten son of the Lord) from the Nicene Creed have been read. The inscription could be commemorative, or it could have served a didactic or perhaps even liturgical purpose but, whatever its exact function, the words of the Creed constitute a statement of faith and community that distinguished believers from non-believers (or orthodox believers from heretics). Acca's Cross is far from the only monument decorated with vine-scroll at Hexham. It appears on multiple cross shafts, most, if not all of which, would have been painted, enhancing the effect of lush vine-scroll growing up from the ground. It also appears on fragments of architectural sculpture (or perhaps church furniture), which

would have visualized not only the spiritual mission of the church to lead the faithful to paradise, but also the idea that the space they inhabited was already a paradise of sorts.[16]

The Hexham landscape extended to include Heavenfield, which was only four and a half miles north of the abbey. The monks of Hexham were central to the development of both the cults of Oswald and of the Cross in the north. Bede records that the Hexham community originally celebrated the feast of St Oswald at Heavenfield.

> To this place the brethren of the church at Hexham, not far away, have long made it their custom to come every year, on the day before that on which King Oswald was killed, to keep vigil there for the benefit of his soul, to sing many psalms of praise, and, next morning, to offer up the holy sacrifice and oblation on his behalf. And since that good custom has spread, a church has lately been built there so that the place has become still more sacred and worthy of honour in the eyes of all. And rightly so: for, as we know, no symbol of the Christian faith, no church, and no altar had been erected in the whole of Bernicia before that new leader of the host, inspired by his devotion to the faith, set up the standard of the holy cross when he was about to fight his most savage enemy.[17]

Heavenfield became a focus for pilgrimage, with both the flow of pilgrims and formal processions controlled by Hexham, and it may be that the multiple carved crosses with their distinctive vine-scroll ornament helped both to mark and to map this landscape.

The most well-known examples of vine-scroll on early Anglo-Saxon sculpture are undoubtedly those decorating the two narrow sides of the 8th-century Ruthwell Cross (Figures 9.4 and 9.5), a monument that is also, perhaps, the best

16 For the range of vine-scroll that survives at Hexham see the images of Hexham 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 21 available at the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture website: http://www.ascorpus.ac.uk/catvol1.php. Accessed 29 July 2019.

17 "In quo uidelicet loco consuetudinem multo iam tempore fecerant fratres Hagustaldensis ecclesiae, quae non longe abest, aduenientes omni anno pridie quam postea idem rex Osuald occisus est, uigilias pro salute animae eius facere, plurimaque psalmorum laude celebrata, uictimam pro eo mane sacrae oblationis offerre. Qui etiam crescente bona consuetudine, nuper ibidem ecclesia constructa, sacratiorem et cunctis honorabiliorem omnibus locum fecere. Nec inmerito, quia nullum, ut conperimus fidei Christianae signum, nulla ecclesia, nullum altare in tota Berniciorum gente erectum est, priusquam hoc sacrae crucis uexillum nouus militiae ductor, dictante fidei deuotione, contra hostem inmanissimum pugnaturus statueret." Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, 3.2, pp. 216–17.

FIGURE 9.4 Ruthwell cross vine-scroll

sculptural statement of English exceptionalism to survive from the period. Unlike the Acca's Cross vine-scrolls, the Ruthwell vine-scrolls are inhabited, locating the Christian community within its paradise imagery in symbolic form. The vines themselves unfurl upwards in one continuous scrolling pattern towards the sun with all the slow but inevitable motion of a growing plant. They draw our attention to the vertical rise of the cross upwards from the earth in contrast to the figural panels of the broad sides, which read like icons, one stacked on top of another, breaking the upward movement into individual images for contemplation. The vines suggest that the stone monument is a

FIGURE 9.5 Ruthwell cross vine-scroll

living, growing tree, and allow the viewer to read it as wood, or as stone, or as both simultaneously, depending on how they choose to interpret it. In its original position the vine-scrolls would have appeared to grow upwards from roots buried deep in the ground—in fact the base of the vine appearing to emerge directly from the ground is one of the most striking aspects of the vine-scrolls on both the Ruthwell Cross and the Bewcastle monument with which it is so often linked. It conveys both the idea of the True Cross with its living wood and the living rock upon which the Christian church was built. The animals that inhabit the scrolls feed on it as if it were a living tree, with the combination of naturalistic and fantastical hybrid creatures helping to suggest that the cross hovers somewhere between the known world and another.

The runic poem carved in the borders around the vine-scroll tells the events of the Crucifixion in the first-person voice of the True Cross.

> Almighty God stripped himself
> when he wished to mount the gallows,
> brave in the sight of all men.
> I dared not bow.
> I [raised aloft] a powerful king.
> The Lord of heaven
> I dared not tilt.
> Men insulted the pair of us together.
> I was drenched with blood
> [begotten from that man's side].
> Christ was on the cross.
> But eager ones came hither from afar.
> Noble ones came together. I beheld all that.
> I was terribly afflicted with sorrows.
> I bowed [to the hands of men],
> wounded with arrows.
> They laid him down, limb-weary;
> they stood at the shoulders of the corpse.
> They looked upon the Lord [of heaven].[18]

The story is one of the foundational stories of the Christian religion and its central mystery, the story of the human Christ's death on the cross and his still mysterious (because it is not spelled out for us) resurrection in heaven. It makes explicit the importance of that space between heaven and earth, at the limits of this world and another world that the little creatures of the vine-scroll merely allude to. The poem is inscribed in Old English, in effect Englishing the events of the Crucifixion, translating and mapping the Holy Land in which the Crucifixion actually took place across time and space and onto Northumbrian soil. This spot, this earth and rock become a truly exceptional place that exists

18 Square brackets indicate letters that have been supplied or restored based on the text of *The Dream of the Rood*. Translation my own. "[+ond]geredæ hinæ god almegttig þa he walde on galgu gistiga modig f[ore] [allæ] men [b]ug … [ahof] ic riicnæ kyniŋc heafunæs hlafard hælda ic ni dorstæ [b]ismærædu uŋket men ba æt[g]ad[re i]c [wæs] miþ blodiæ bist[e]mi[d] bi[got][en of] … [+k]ris[t] wæs on rodi hweþræ þer fusæ fearran kwomu æþþilæ til anum ic þæt al bi[h][eald] s[aræ] ic w[æ]s mi[þ] so[r]gu[m] gi[d]ræ[fi]d h[n] a[g] … miþ s[t]re[l]um giwundad alegdun hiæ [h]inæ limwœrignæ gistoddu[n h]im [æt] [his] [li][c]æs [hea]f[du]m[bih]ea[ld]u[n h]i[æ þ]e[r] …"

simultaneously here and elsewhere, eternally mediating between heaven and earth.

The fall and replacement of the rebel angels, a key theme in the art of the 10th-century monastic reform that allowed the English to identify themselves with the angels just as readily as the Gregory story had done, does not appear in early Anglo-Saxon art. The Annunciation does however, and, like the replacement of the rebel angels, it is symbolic of rebirth and the beginning of human redemption, and is typologically related to the fall of the angels and the creation of Adam and Eve as their replacements. In his third Homily on Advent Bede stressed both the redemptive nature of the Annunciation for humanity as a whole and the fact that it was the moment of the incarnation of Christ as king who will reign over the universal church and lead the Christian faithful out of their exile on earth.[19] It was thus a story that could fit easily into the Anglo-Saxons' ideas about their origins, uniting the tropes of exile and rebirth, or new beginning, with the descent of an angel to earth and the rise of humanity to heaven. In the case of Ruthwell, erected on what had previously been British land, it is equally appropriate to an understanding of the monument as staking a claim to new territory in the name of the expanding Northumbrian church and kingdom.[20]

The position of the Annunciation panel (Figure 9.6) at the bottom of the original east face of the Ruthwell Cross is unusual. It brings the Annunciation down to earth, so to speak, and sets it on a very human level, depicting Gabriel as if he is just stepping into the space of the panel and onto the earth from which the cross rises. In the cross's original position with the base buried in the ground this would have been even more apparent.[21] The panel's position makes iconographic sense as the Annunciation is the moment at which the divine descends to earth and takes on human form, and it is both symbolically and chronologically the moment on which the other events depicted in the cross's panels and related in its runic poem rest. However, among early medieval depictions of the Annunciation its position on the cross is unusual. The Annunciation is not a common subject on surviving crosses, but when it does appear it is never at the base. On the later 8th- or 9th-century Auckland St Andrew 1 cross it is higher up the shaft and positioned above the Crucifixion,

19 Bede, *Opera homiletica: Opera rhythmica*, ed. D. Hurst and J. Fraipont, CCSL 122 (Turnhout, 1955), pp. 14–17.

20 See further Fred Orton and Ian Wood with Clare A. Lees, *Fragments of History: Rethinking the Ruthwell and Bewcastle Monuments* (Manchester, 2007).

21 The cross was dug up and brought into the church at some point in the Anglo-Saxon period and the Crucifixion was added to the east face of the formerly buried base in the 9th century.

FIGURE 9.6 Ruthwell cross, annunciation panel

and on the 9th-century Sandbach 1 cross it is positioned near the middle of the shaft.[22]

Other sculptural representations of the Annunciation are no longer *in situ* and/or appear on very different types of monuments. On the late 8th- or early 9th-century Hovingham and Wirksworth slabs, both the fragmentary remains

22 My numbering of the monuments follows that of the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture.

FIGURE 9.7
Breedon Angel

of shrines or sarcophagi, the scene is part of much larger and rather crowded horizontal narratives. It has been suggested that both the 8th-century Breedon (Figure 9.7) and Lichfield (Figure 9.8) angels were originally parts of Annunciations, although we cannot be certain that that is actually the case. There is no concrete evidence for the exact original position of the Breedon angel within the Anglo-Saxon church (it is now built into the wall of the later Norman tower), and iconographically both it and Lichfield could just as easily be images of the Archangel Michael as they could Gabriel; indeed, as will be discussed further below, the Lichfield angel in particular is an extremely militant-looking figure. If they are images of Gabriel, and if the Breedon angel was originally an architectural sculpture—which is usually assumed to be the case—surviving evidence in the form of painted icons and mosaics from Rome and elsewhere on the Continent indicates that it was likely to have been situated higher up on

FIGURE 9.8 Repton rider

the wall or chancel arch and so very much separated from the ground on which everyday women and men walked.[23] If parts of shrines, as seems most likely for the Lichfield angel, it is what is housed in or under the shrine that is protected

23 On the Breedon angel see Richard Jewel, "Classicism of Southumbrian Sculpture," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (Leicester, 2001), pp. 246–62.

by the angel, and the fact that the angel mediates between the saint and the heavenly kingdom that are important, rather than the surface on which the shrine rests. Nevertheless, it's important to note that there is evidence for a shrine surmounted by a baldachin at Lichfield, but the exact form it took is a matter of some speculation.[24] It had no base so it was designed to cover rather than to contain something, and so the angel may well have appeared to be alighting among the faithful within the church.

The classicism, use of space, and subtle but complex sense of motion of the Ruthwell panel have received quite a lot of attention.[25] The angel is depicted in motion as if he is just entering earthly space. One foot rests firmly on the ground while the other is just in the process of stepping down. A bit of the right wing and arm and the drapery covering the right leg extend out beyond the edge of the frame and into the space of the viewer—as do a portion of the left arm and drapery of the Virgin as she shrinks back in humility. The angel is framed by the two inhabited vine-scrolls of the cross's narrow sides, the upward motion of which balances the implied movement of the angel down from heaven to earth. At the same time, the pose and position of the angel help to remind the viewer of the connection between the Annunciation and the Crucifixion narrated in the runic poem that surrounds the vines, and of the connection between the Virgin and the cross as bearers of Christ.

The pose and motion of the angel are repeated though in slightly heavier and less classicizing style in both the Breedon and Lichfield figures, as is something of the paradise setting. The Breedon angel is framed by two lush pomegranates, the seeds of which, like the little animals in the Ruthwell vines, are symbolic of the faithful. The Lichfield angel has one foot on a growing vine that grows out of the stone surface on which he alights, and the leaves of which are echoed by the leafy arms of the terminals of his staff. All three angels are then set within or alongside references to paradise out of or through which they move. Most importantly, however, the use of space and sense of motion of the figures both unites them as a group and is unique in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon and Insular stone sculpture. The Breedon angel has his left foot firmly on the

24 On the Lichfield angel see Jane Hawkes and Philip Sidebottom, *Derbyshire and Staffordshire*, Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture 13 (Oxford, 2018), pp. 302–07; Warwick Rodwell, Jane Hawkes, Emily Howe, and Rosemary Cramp, "The Lichfield Angel: A Spectacular Anglo-Saxon Painted Sculpture," *Antiquaries Journal* 88 (2008), 48–108; Michelle P. Brown, "The Lichfield Angel: Lichfield as a Centre of Insular Art," *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 160, no. 1 (2007), 8–19.

25 See e.g. Catherine E. Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 79–82; Éamonn Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the Rood: Liturgical Images and the Old English Poems of the Dream of the Rood Tradition* (London, 2005), passim.

ground while the toes of his right foot, the fingers of his raised right hand, the tips of his right wing, and the drapery folded over his left arm break out beyond the space of the arch in which he stands. While the panel may have been high up on a wall, he enters into our space, the space of the church, as if perhaps stepping out of the wall in a manner similar to the way in which the stone angel described in the poem *Andreas* steps down from the wall of the temple to walk the earth at the Lord's command.

> Swylce he wrætlice wundor agræfene,
> anlicnesse engla sinra
> geseh, sigora Frea, on seles wage,
> on twa healfe torhte gefrætwed,
> wlitige geworhte …
> "Nu ic bebeode beacen ætywan,
> wundor geweorðan on wera gemange,
> ðæt þeos onlicnes eorðan sece,
> wlitig of wage, ond word sprece
> secge soð-cwidum, þy sceolon gelyfan
> eorlas on cyððe hwæt min æðelo sien."
> Ne dorste þa forhylman hælendes bebod
> wundor fore-weorodum, ac of wealle ahleop,
> frod fyrn-geweorc, þæt he on foldan stod,
> stane fram stane. Stefn æfter cwom,
> hlud þurh heardne; hleoðor dynede,
> wordum wemde. Wrætlic þuhte
> stið-hycgendum stanes ongin.[26] (ll. 712–16, 727–41)

The event is part of a miracle story told by the apostle as he is crossing the ocean towards Mermedonia with its population of barbaric cannibals. Unlike

26 Text from Mary Clayton, ed. and trans., *Old English Poems of Christ and His Saints* (Cambridge, MA, 2013), pp. 230, 232; translation my own. "The Lord of victories also saw on the walls of the hall on two sides such wonderfully carved images in the likeness of his angels, beautifully made, splendidly decorated. He spoke words … 'Now I command a sign to appear a wonder to take place among the people, that this beautiful likeness should come down from the wall, seek the earth, and speak words, say in true words what my origin is so that people in my home land shall believe.'
"That wonder did not dare disregard the Lord's command but before the crowd leapt from the wall, wise work of old, so that it stood on the ground, stone from stone. A loud voice then came from the hardness; the voice thundered, speaking words. The stone's actions appeared wondrous to the stubborn ones."

its sources, however, Mermedonia in this poem is an island borderland that has much in common with the Britannia into which the Anglo-Saxons believed they had brought civilization and Christianity.[27]

In *Andreas* the stone angel moves into the temple and out across the land, the "grene grundas" (green ground; l. 776) spreading the word of God to the stubborn ones as he progressed through time and space. He was both a sign and a carrier of Christ's victory, and as such he has a special resonance with all three of the Anglo-Saxon sculpted angels, each of which is located in an area important to the spread or consolidation of an Anglo-Saxon Christian kingdom, and each of which is thus also a sign of victory on both a secular and religious level. In art one of the primary sources for the image of the angel is in the victory figures of the classical world. The military or political victories they represented were translated into the religious victories of Christianity, but Christian angels retained a level of militancy embodied most notably by the Archangel Michael with whom Gabriel, the angel of the Annunciation, is so closely paired. I have argued elsewhere that the Ruthwell, Breedon, and Lichfield angels are particularly close to a victory figure from the Roman fort at Stanwix,[28] now a suburb of Carlisle, but Roman images of victory were so common and so well known in Anglo-Saxon England that the resemblance is certainly of a more general sort. Ruthwell is situated not far north of Carlisle on the old Roman road that extended north into Scotland, so an image that could simultaneously invoke both imperial victory and the Roman church was perhaps particularly appropriate there, especially as the cross is a monument to both Northumbrian expansion into previously British territory and its carrying of the Roman (as opposed to the Celtic or British) church with it.

The Breedon and Lichfield angels, in contrast, can be linked to the end of Northumbrian aggression towards Mercia and Wales and the rise of the Mercian supremacy, a situation in which both the Annunciation and the victory figure could have carried a similar range of religious and political valences that they did at Ruthwell, though ones linked to successful defence rather than aggression. Breedon, or more properly Breedon-on-the-Hill is located in a commanding position on top of what had been a prehistoric hillfort. David Parsons has compared it (and sites like it) to Roman forts with many, as was the case with Breedon, being royal property that was donated to the church. Its

27 On the similarities between Mermedonia and Britain see Lindy Brady, "Echoes of Britons on a Fenland Frontier in the Old English *Andreas*," *The Review of English Studies* 61.252 (2010), 669–89; Alexandra Bolintineanu, "Mermedonia in the Old English *Andreas*," *Neophilologus* 93 (2009), 149–64; Heather Blurton, *Cannibalism in High Medieval English Literature* (New York, 2007), pp. 9, 25.

28 Karkov, *The Art of Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 79–82.

first abbot was Hædda from Peterborough, under whom a number of daughter houses were established. The land was donated in the 670s by Friduric, *princeps*, and eventually saint, and was later enhanced by the donation of what would become Repton, Guthlac's monastery and the burial place for many of the Mercian kings.[29] It was rebuilt in the late 8th or early 9th century during the years when Mercia was at the peak of its power. The wealth of sculpture that survives at the site, including the remains of two architectural friezes attests to the wealth and importance of the early monastery. Its stylistic sources are in Byzantine and late-antique or early Christian Roman art thus speaking as much of court and empire as of the Christian church and its spread westwards. Indeed one of the most oft-cited parallels for the stance and setting of the Breedon angel—complete with the impression of emerging from the carved background—is the mid 6th-century ivory panel with the archangel Michael now in the British Museum, although the ivory is small in scale while the angel is an imposing 91 cm tall.[30] The Breedon angel also has his hand raised in the Greek sign of blessing rather than the Latin form used by the Lichfield and, probably, Ruthwell angels. The famous figure of an armed warrior on horseback derived from monuments commemorating Roman cavalrymen, but in this case sporting an Anglo-Saxon-style moustache (Figure 9.9), is contemporary with the angel, and strengthens the likely victorious political resonances of the latter. Leslie Webster has noted that the location of the Repton figure on the same site as the mausoleum of the Mercian kings "suggests a royal Anglo-Saxon patron lies behind the commissioning of such a work, and may even be depicted on it in a graphic icon of secular power integrated into a Christian iconography."[31]

The appearance of the Lichfield angel is decidedly more martial than those of Breedon and Ruthwell. His legs show through the drapery of his short tunic like those of a soldier and there is a suggestion of a breastplate in the way the folds of his tunic are draped over the rounded shape covering his left breast. The Lichfield angel is believed to have been part of a shrine to St Chad which may have been constructed to cover his original wooden coffin at the time that Lichfield was elevated to archiepiscopal status under Offa, the most powerful of the Mercian kings. The angel's victorious appearance is appropriate both to the 7th-century foundation and the saint whose remains the shrine enclosed, as well as to the rise of Lichfield as a Mercian power centre that rivalled that of Canterbury. Educated in Northumbria, Chad became the first bishop of

29 David Parsons, "The Mercian Church: Archaeology and Topography," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (Leicester, 2001), pp. 51–68, at 56.

30 See https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=62025&partId=1. Accessed 39 July 2019.

31 Leslie Webster, *Anglo-Saxon Art* (London, 2012), p. 130.

FIGURE 9.9 Lichfield Angel

Lichfield in 669 and died in 672. Bede described Chad's coffin as house-shaped and having a hole in one side that allowed the faithful to insert their hands and remove some of the dust.[32] The land for the monastery had been donated by

32 Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 4.3, p. 346.

Wulfhere, the first Christian king of Mercia in what had formerly been a British centre. A British bishop and community of monks had previously been settled at nearby Letocetum, but with Chad's arrival at the new foundation the religious centre of the area moved to Lichfield.[33] The travel of angels and Anglo-Saxon men between heaven and earth feature prominently in what Bede tells us about Chad. The sound of singing angels came down from heaven to tell the saint of his imminent death, and at the moment of his death his brother Cedd descended with a host of angels to carry his soul up to heaven.[34] The plague that killed Chad also carried off many of the members of his monastic community whose deaths "translated the living stones of the church from their earthly sites to the heavenly building."[35] The reference to the living stones of the church is biblical, but also brings to mind the stone angel that steps out of the walls of the temple in *Andreas*.

Like Ruthwell and Breedon, the Lichfield angel is believed to be one half of an Annunciation scene, and the evidence for such an identification is strong;[36] nevertheless, as part of a commemorative monument it may be that the figure was also intended to evoke the archangel Michael, whose role at the Last Judgement, the moment at which all earthly souls will be judged, would be just as appropriate as the Annunciation to the shrine. The evocation of two or more separate states of being, times, figures, or creatures in a single image is far from unusual in Anglo-Saxon culture as evidenced by the Ruthwell Cross (both living tree and stone monument), its Visitation/Martha and Mary panel, the Sutton Hoo helmet, the Old English riddles, or *The Dream of the Rood*.

However we choose to interpret specific elements of their iconographies and historical contexts, the Ruthwell, Breedon, and Lichfield angels are a unique group within early Anglo-Saxon art. One is part of a stone cross, one likely an architectural sculpture, and one most probably part of a shrine but they are united by the depiction of the figures within a paradise setting that is both heavenly and very much of this world, the here and now of the times and places in which they were made. Their vines and pomegranates grow up towards the heavenly paradise but are made from and grow from the stone

33 See further, Stephen Bassett, "How the West Was Won: The Anglo-Saxon Take-over in the West Midlands," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 11 (2000), 107–18; Barbara Yorke, "The Origins of Mercia," in *Mercia: An Anglo-Saxon Kingdom in Europe*, ed. Michelle P. Brown and Carol A. Farr (Leicester, 2001), pp. 13–22, at 20.

34 Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 4.3, pp. 342, 344.

35 "Uiuos ecclesiae lapides de terrenis sedibus ad aedificium caeleste transferret": Bede, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History*, 4.3, pp. 338–39.

36 Rodwell, Hawkes, Howe, and Cramp, "The Lichfield Angel: A Spectacular Anglo-Saxon Painted Sculpture"; Hawkes and Sidebottom, *Derbyshire and Staffordshire*, pp. 302–07.

of this particular island paradise. Angels are intermediaries between heaven and earth, but the classicism, naturalistic motion, and volume of their bodies make these angels very human in appearance and very much at home in the human world they enter—just like the stone angel in *Andreas*. Moreover, both the Ruthwell and Breedon angels physically enter into the viewer's space, helping to make the exceptional nature of these specific spaces clear. The Ruthwell angel in particular steps onto the same earth from which the vine-scrolls of the cross's narrow sides grow. His pose and position help to remind the viewer of the connection between the Annunciation and the Crucifixion narrated in the runic poem that surrounds the vines, and of the connection between the Virgin and the cross as bearers of Christ. The first-person voice of the Ruthwell poem make that cross that originally bore Christ this cross. They translate that event from Jerusalem and the past onto Northumbrian soil, making it eternally present to the faithful, but also laying claim to time and space in a way that is not all that far removed from that of the Tiberius B.v world map. As the angel alights onto this ground, steps onto and out of the same rock, it could be understood as doing similar work. The Annunciation too takes place in the here and now, furthering the idea that the Anglo-Saxons were indeed closer to God and the angels than other peoples, and that their island garden was indeed an exceptional space located on the edges between this world and another.

The vine-scroll that was so prominent a part of early Anglo-Saxon sculpture is much less of a feature of later Anglo-Saxon art, although it does survive in markedly less classical form in sculpture of the Anglo-Scandinavian period. Its symbolism, however, was carried into later manuscript illumination via the rich acanthus-filled borders of reform-period and later manuscripts. In some of the most lavish of these the acanthus wraps itself around gilded bars that seem to support it like a trellis. One of the earliest and best-known examples of this style is seen in the frontispiece to the New Minster Charter (Figure 9.1), which provides a fitting concluding image for the argument presented in this essay. The frontispiece depicts King Edgar offering the charter to Christ enthroned in a mandorla supported by angels. Rather than the angels stepping down into earthly space, this image shows Edgar rising up to meet them in a liminal space between this world and the next. Against a timeless purple background that is symbolic of both earthly and celestial kingship (and imitates the imperial purple manuscripts of the Carolingian and Byzantine worlds), he stands level with, and is in fact taller than the Virgin and St Peter who flank him. He reaches up so that the fingers of his right hand and the charter held in his left hand touch the garments of the lowermost angels, his body completing the circle of figures that surrounds Christ. As I have noted previously, the text

of the charter plays on the Latin terms for the angels and the English throughout, opening with references to angelic creation, the fall of the rebel angels, and the co-fellowship of humans and angels (*angelorum*) in paradise, and ending with the king's subscription as "Anglorum basileus" (king of the English).[37] With the charter what had begun as a simple legend about the origins and exceptional nature of England and the English took on the force of royal and ecclesiastical diplomatic. In depicting the king and Christ coming together in a space that effectively spanned the limits between heaven and earth it laid the foundations for the image of an English empire that imagined itself as rightfully spanning the globe.

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37 Catherine E. Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), p. 88; eadem, "The Frontispiece to the New Minster Charter and the King's Two Bodies," in *Edgar, King of the English, 959–975*, ed. Donald Scragg (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 224–41; see also Brian O'Camb, "Toward a Monastic Poetics: Envisioning King Edgar's Privilege for New Minster, Winchester, and 'Advent Lyric 11,'" in *Anglo-Saxon England and the Visual Imagination*, ed. John D. Niles, Stacy S. Klein, and Jonathan Wilcox (Tempe, 2016), pp. 167–98.

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CHAPTER 10

The New Israel Motif in Early Medieval Origin Legends

Conor O'Brien

Origin legends emerged in response to one of the fundamental cultural phenomena of the transition between the ancient and medieval worlds. As new identities and ethnicities appeared, especially in the Latin West, a new literary genre was required to make sense of such identities within (and sometimes against) the historical accounts inherited from the Bible and classical learning. At the same time, the former Roman world saw a surge in interest in the Old Testament as the image of biblical Israel came to shape how those new identities were expressed.[1] Consequently, a recurring theme in modern scholarship of the early medieval origin legends is the motif of the New Israel—where a post-Roman ethnic group claims equivalence with the Hebrews of the Old Testament. Indeed, the New Israel motif has been identified in texts other than origin legends, such as Gildas's *De excidio Britonum* and the *Opus Caroli* produced at the court of Charlemagne; considering the nature of this volume, I cannot explore such examples here.[2] Scholars have applied the terminology of the New Israel to writings dealing with almost every early medieval ethnic group, presumably taking the broad similarity of developments in different regions to justify the use of the same language in the scholarship of those areas.

In consequence, the popularity of the phrase 'New Israel' in modern scholarship potentially suggests that a recognized literary motif existed on which the authors and compilers of origin legends in the early Middle Ages could draw

1 Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000*, 3rd ed. (Oxford, 2013), pp. 139–41; Walter Pohl, "Disputed Identifications: Jews and the Use of Biblical Models in the Barbarian Kingdoms," in *Barbarians and Jews: Jews and Judaism in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Thomas F.X. Noble (Turnhout, 2018), pp. 11–28; Raymund Kottje, *Studien zum Einfluss des Alten Testamentes auf Recht und Liturgie des frühen Mittelalters (6.-8. Jahrhundert)* (Bonn, 1964).

2 See Mary Garrison, "The Franks as the New Israel: Education for an Identity from Pippin to Charlemagne," in *The Uses of the Past in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 114–61; Conor O'Brien, "Empire, Ethnic Election, and Exegesis in the *Opus Caroli* (*Libri Carolini*)," in *The Church and Empire*, ed. Stewart J. Brown, Charlotte Methuen and Andrew Spicer, Studies in Church History 53 (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 96–108; Conor O'Brien, "Chosen Peoples and New Israels in the Early Medieval West," *Speculum* 95 (2020), 987–1009.

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if they wanted to claim the equality of their own ethnic group with the biblical chosen people. This chapter, however, will emphasize the diversity of approach seen in the sources to argue for a much messier situation than scholarly reliance on the New Israel motif suggests. Early medieval writers and compilers almost never produced origin legends which straightforwardly substituted their own ethnic group for the Israel of the Old Testament. To some extent, indeed, there was no New Israel motif in early medieval origin legends, only a variety of different strategies drawn on by intellectuals to find a place for Israelite history or Old Testament imagery in the account of their own people's place in the world.

Many *origines gentium* naturally grant a special role to the *gens* whose history they supposedly recount. In some cases that may include the ethnic group receiving divine or providential aid during their formative adventures—often without any evidence that Israel was a conscious model of the author(s).[3] Some historians might describe such texts as presenting their subjects as a 'chosen people,' language which invites comparison with the biblical image of Israel, but this chapter focuses on a much narrower range of sources: those for which a direct comparison of the early medieval people with Old Testament Israel has been posited, where historians have argued for the scriptural story of the Hebrews as the authors' model in presenting the origins and early history of their people. Even that focus could include a much larger pool of texts and legends than could easily be studied in the confines of a single chapter. I have, therefore, had to leave out many origin legends, such as those of the Goths or Lombards, which scholars have argued utilize the New Israel motif.[4]

I will look briefly at case studies of *origines gentium* from three different ethnic communities in western Europe (the Franks, Irish, and Anglo-Saxons), all of which emerged (at least initially) between the 7th and 9th centuries, although in one case I will end up going centuries beyond that to tell the story fully. A claim for the presence of the New Israel motif in the legend was made on a different basis in each case: the *Liber historiae Francorum* repurposes the language of the Old Testament to describe the early history of the Franks; the Irish origin legend creates a historical parallel between the Gaels and the Israelites; and the Anglo-Saxon one assumes a typological parallel between the English and the Israelites. By exploring the diversity of ways an early medieval origin legend could utilize the model of Old Testament Israel I hope to show the error of assuming a one-size-fits-all explanation for how the history of Israel shaped the stories of western European peoples in the post-Roman period.

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3 Herwig Wolfram, "*Origo et religio*: Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), 19–38 at p. 35.

4 E.g. John Moorhead, "A Biblical Background for the Newcomers of Late Antiquity," *Latomus* 69 (2010), 811–17; Ulrike Nagengast, *Gothorum florentissima gens*: *Gotengeschichte als Heilsgeschichte bei Isidor von Sevilla* (Berlin, 2011).

1 Frankish History in Old Testament Style

The so-called *Liber historiae Francorum* (hereafter *LHF*; the manuscripts usually call it some variant on the "Origin and Deeds of the Kings and People of the Franks") was written by an unknown (possibly female) author in the year 727, probably somewhere in Frankish Neustria in the neighbourhood of Soissons.[5] It tells the story of the Franks from their origins at the fall of Troy until the present day, with a large section of the narrative adapted from Gregory of Tours's *Histories*. Traditionally seen, consequently, as derivative, the *LHF* has mainly been studied for its independent witness to late Merovingian history in the second half of the work and for its account of the origins of the Franks, something about which Gregory was notoriously vague and/or poorly informed. Scholarship has focused most on the Trojan elements in the *LHF*'s origin legend and how this served to position the Franks vis-à-vis Roman history.[6]

Only recently have historians begun to explore the ways in which the use of the Bible, and the Old Testament history of Israel in particular, shaped the narrative of the *LHF*. In his ground-breaking study on the early medieval writing of Frankish history, Helmut Reimitz argues that the "real substance of the text was its use of Old Testament models and motifs to conceptualize the social reality of the Merovingian kingdoms"; for Reimitz, the use of the Old Testament in the *LHF* goes so deep that the "Franks of the *Liber* are not *like* the biblical Israel. They *are* the chosen people."[7] Simultaneously, Philipp Dörler argued that the author "not only uses the Bible as a point of reference for comparing the Franks with the people of Israel," but makes them "the direct descendants of the people of Israel."[8] This recent interpretation totally reverses previous scholarship. Only a decade before Reimitz and Dörler's work, Rosamond McKitterick could say that the *LHF* "rejected" portraying the Franks as a chosen people following the biblical

5 For debate on the author, see Richard A. Gerberding, *The Rise of the Carolingians and the "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 146–59, and Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 10.

6 Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 17–18, 29–30; McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 10–11; Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47–57; Magali Coumert, *Origines des peoples: les récits du haut Moyen Âge occidental (550-850)*, (Paris, 2007), pp. 325–39; Richard Broome, "Approaches to the Frankish Community in the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum*," in *The Long Seventh Century: Continuity and Discontinuity in an Age of Transition*, ed. Emanuele E. Intagliata, Alessandro Gnasso, and Thomas J. MacMaster (Berlin, 2015), pp. 61–85 at pp. 71–75.

7 Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550-850* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 277, 450.

8 Philipp Dörler, "The *Liber historiae Francorum* – A Model for a New Frankish Self-Confidence," *Networks and Neighbours* 1 (2013), 23–43 at pp. 40–41.

model.[9] At that time, it was understood as a resolutely secular narrative, reflecting an elite lay perspective, and self-consciously moving away from Gregory of Tours's religious framing of Frankish history.[10] Reimitz argues the *LHF* deployed a New Israel motif celebrating Frankish identity in order to overturn Gregory's account of early Frankish history, which, he has convincingly shown, had "strictly avoided identifying the Franks with the biblical people of Israel."[11]

The new interpretation hinges on the presence of Old Testament language throughout the *LHF*; the author rarely explicitly drew attention to the Old Testament or the history of Israel and so, Reimitz argues, never had to confront complex questions of typological exegesis or of how the Franks related to the Israelites in terms of salvation history. Rather, he or she simply expected the attentive reader to note that the *LHF* recounted Frankish history in the Old Testament style of Israelite history and, therefore, to equate the Franks and Israel.[12] Most obviously, at the end of the *LHF*'s account of the Franks' wanderings after Troy, they arrive in the regions of the Rhine and decide that they ought to establish a king for themselves "like other peoples." The phrase echoes the demand of the Hebrews that Samuel establish a king over them "like all the peoples."[13] King Chlodio's sending *exploratores* into Roman Gaul would have reminded, Reimitz suggests, "any early medieval churchgoer" of Joshua's actions in the invasion of the Promised Land, as would the subsequent slaughter of the natives enacted by the Franks.[14] Such Old Testament echoes can be found throughout the narrative—as echoes of Shakespeare or the King James Bible appear in much English prose. But echoes do not prove intention.

Take the phrase *de nocte consurgens*. When Queen Fredegund leads an army against the Burgundians and Austrasians, she advises the Franks "Let us rise up against them in the night"—which they do;[15] at a later point in the narrative,

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9 McKitterick, *History and Memory*, p. 10.

10 Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 31–32, 45, 159–61; Stéphane Lebecq, "Introduction," in *La geste des rois des Francs: "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Paris, 2015), pp. i-xcii at pp. xiv–xv, xxxii–xxxiii, xlii–xlvi. See Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 251–53.

11 Ibid., pp. 27–124, 284 (whence quotation).

12 Ibid., pp. 258–59.

13 *Liber historiae Francorum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 215–328 [hereafter: *LHF*] 4, p. 244: "acciperunt consilium, ut regem sibi unum constituerunt, sicut ceterae gentes." 1 Sam. 8:19–20: "dixerunt nequaquam rex enim erit super nos et erimus nos quoque sicut omnes gentes."

14 Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, p. 260. *LHF* 5, pp. 245–46: "Chlodio autem rex misit exploratores de Disbargo castello Toringorum usque ad urbem Camaracum. Ipse postea cum grande exercitu Renum transiit, multo Romanorum populo occidit atque fugavit … Romanos quos ibi invenit interficit." Josh. 2:1: "misit ergo Iosue filius Nun de Setthim duos viros exploratores"; Josh. 6:21: "interfecerunt omnia quae errant in ea a viro usque ad mulierem ab infantem usque ad senem."

15 *LHF* 36, p. 305: "consilium dedit Francos, quo cum ea errant, dicens: 'De nocte consurgamus contra eos cum lucernis …' Placuitque hoc consilium. … sicut consilium dederat, de

Chlothar II rises up in the night with his army to the din of trumpets to go to his son's aid;[16] later again, the wily Mayor of the Palace Ebroin, reminded of Fredegund when in a sticky situation, rises up in the night to steal a march on his enemies.[17] This phraseology echoes the Old Testament account of Joshua at Jericho, rising up in the night to lead the people of Israel around the city with the blowing of trumpets, and its use by the author of the *LHF* suggests to Reimitz "a real synthesis" of Frankish epic history and Old Testament idiom.[18] However, variants on the phrase *de nocte consurgens* appear 15 times in the Vulgate: twice with reference to Joshua, but also twice with reference to Gideon, as well as to describe, the gentile Abimelech, Abraham, the pagan Laban, Moses, and an unnamed Levite;[19] it is most frequently associated (five times) with the prophets sent by God to warn Israel of its sins, but who are ignored.[20] It may have been that use of the term that Gregory of Tours had in mind when he used it to describe St Quintianus fleeing the Goths of Rodez at night;[21] but it almost certainly was not in his mind when speaking of a drunken pauper who accidentally witnessed a nocturnal rendezvous between Sts Peter and Paul.[22]

De nocte consurgens had entered Frankish historical writing before the *LHF*, then, in a way that suggests it may have become simply a biblically inflected way of describing someone getting up early.[23] The significance of the phrase's use in *LHF* rather depends on the author having one out of many possible referents in

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nocte consurgens … usque Trucia pervenerunt." In *LHF* 'the Franks' are usually the Neustrians, rather than the inhabitants of any other part of the Merovingian kingdoms.

16 *LHF* 41, p. 312: "cum strepitu tubarum de nocte consurgens, cum exercitu suo Renum transiit et in auxilium filii sui festinus pervenit."

17 Ibid. 45, p. 319: "'De Fredegunde tibi subveniat in memoriam.' At ille, ingeniosus ut erat, intellexit. De nocte consurgens, commoto exercitu, usque Isra fluvium veniens, interfectis custodibus, ad Sanctam Maxenciam Isra transiit."

18 Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, p. 261. Josh. 3:1: "Igitur Josue de nocte consurgens movit castra"; Josh. 6:12–13: "Igitur Josue de nocte consurgente, tulerunt sacerdotes arcam Domini … vulgus autem reliquum sequebatur arcam, et buccinis personabat."

19 Judg. 6:38, 7:1, 19:5; Exod. 34:4; Gen. 20:8, 22:3, 31:55.

20 2 Chron. 36:15; Jer. 25:3, 26:5, 29:19, 44:4.

21 Gregory of Tours, *Liber vitae partum,* ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 1.2 (Hanover, 1885), pp. 211–94, 4.1, p. 224: "de nocte consurgens, cum fidelissimis ministris suis ab urbe illa egrediens, Arvernus advenit." Also Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum decem,* ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 1.1 (Hanover, 1951), 2.36, p. 84.

22 Gregory of Tours, *Libri historiarum* 2.7, p. 49: "quadam nocte homo pauperculus, crapulatus a vino, in angulo basilicae beati Petri apostoli obdormivit. Clausis autem ex more usteis, a custodibus non est nanctus. De nocte vero consurgens, relucentibus per tota aedis spatia lychinis, pavore territus, aditum, per quem foris evaderit, quaerit."

23 E.g. *Vita Adelphi abbatis Habendensis*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 4 (Hanover, 1902), pp. 225–28, 5, p. 227: "Garichramnus abbas de nocte consurgens." For a late 7th-century dating of this *Life*: Monique Goullet, "Les saints du diocèse de Toul

mind and being confident that his or her audience would pick up on that and come to a rather specific conclusion, without clear guidance: namely, that the Frankish armies led by Fredegund, Chlothar, and Ebroin could be equated to the Israelites led by Joshua. This may have happened if the audience were primed by something like the liturgy—suggested by Reimitz's reference elsewhere to the "medieval churchgoer." One of the verses describing Joshua as *de nocte consurgens* was probably read on the Easter Vigil in 7th-century Neustria, but any reader familiar with the phrase from that occasion would remember that it appeared in the Bible also with reference to Abraham, since the tale of Isaac's sacrifice featured at the same service.[24] The phrase was not guaranteed to conjure up images of Israel on the warpath.

Another biblical tag associated with Fredegund in the *LHF* is "full of days," used to describe her age at death—phraseology which, Dörler asserts, "compares her to the great biblical King David."[25] But the phrase *plenus dierum* also appears in the Vulgate to indicate the great age at their death of Abraham, Isaac, the priest Joiada, and Job. The verbal parallel seems closest between the *LHF* and the final line of the Book of Job and least convincing for David, the only biblical character not to die in the verse that uses the phrase.[26] Job was, for early medieval Christians, a gentile, not an Israelite;[27] to privilege the comparison with David (Dörler never mentions the other examples) assumes the *LHF* author's desire to link a Frankish ruler with an Israelite one, it does not prove it. Indeed, the application of such biblical language to a Merovingian queen at her death had already entered the Frankish historiographical tradition when Gregory of Tours described Clovis's widow Chlothild as dying "full of days."[28] He, in turn, was quoted by the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and by some manuscripts of the *LHF*, so the author of the latter may have wished to compare Fredegund to Chlothild as much as to anyone from the Old Testament.[29]

(SHG VI)," in *L'hagiographie du haut Moyen Âge en Gaule du Nord. Manuscrits, textes et centres de production*, ed. Martin Heinzelmann (Stuttgart, 2001), 11–90 at pp. 62-64.

24 See Pierre Salmon, *Le lectionnaire de Luxeuil Paris, ms. Lat. 9427): Édition et étude comparative* (Rome, 1944), pp. 99, 107. The reading from Gen. 22 seems to be the better attested for use on this day: ibid., pp. cxii, 98n.

25 Dörler, "The *Liber historiae Francorum*," p. 38; *LHF* 37, p. 306: "mortua est Fredegundis regina senex et plena dierum." See 1 Chron. 23:1: "David senex et plenus dierum regem constituit Salomonem filium suum super Israel."

26 Gen. 25:8, 35:29; 2 Chron. 24:15; Job 42:17: "mortuus est senex et plena dierum."

27 Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143 (Turnhout, 1979), pref.2, pp. 10–11; Isidore of Seville, *De ortu et obitu partum,* ed. C. Chaparro Gómez (Paris, 1985), 24.1, pp. 135–37. Lawrence L. Besserman, The *Legend of Job in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), pp. 67, 85, 170.

28 Gregory, *Libri historiarum* 4.1, p. 135: "Igitur Chrodigildis regina, plena dierum bonisque operibus praedita, apud urbem Toronicam obiit tempore Iniuriosi episcopi." Gregory also used the phrase of many saints.

29 *Fredegarii chronica*, ed. Bruno Krusch, MGH Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2 (Hanover, 1888), pp. 1–193, 3.46, p. 106; *LHF* 27, p. 285.

None of this lengthy contextualization of a few words disproves the fact that the author of the *LHF* did weave bolts of biblical colour into their tapestry of Frankish history or undermines Reimitz's important analysis of the text. It should, however, caution against assuming, in the absence of explicit guidance from the author, that a coherent New Israel motif underlies it. When he or she directly compared King Dagobert to Solomon the author drew on the Old Testament to direct the reader's understanding in a way deeply rooted in contemporary political discourse;[30] without similar guidance, there is simply too much static around many of the examples of Old Testament style for us to assume that we know what meaning the author intended to transmit.

2 The Two Exoduses

While the author of the *LHF* may have sought to write in a biblical style, many other early medieval origin legends wrote their subjects into the biblical narrative itself. One of the grandest of these is the Irish origin legend now best associated with the *Lebor Gabála Érenn* ("The Book of the Taking of Ireland") which recounts how the Irish (the Gaels) made their way, via Egypt, Spain, and many adventures, from Scythia to their eventual island home. Their journeys were modelled, at least in part, on those of the children of Israel and their forefathers as recounted in Genesis and Exodus and, consequently, "in the scholarship there is a consensus that the overarching purpose of the legend is to give the Irish a past and an identity commensurate with those of the Hebrews of the Old Testament."[31] In its complete form, the origin legend recorded in the *Lebor Gabála* tells of how Ireland was successively populated by waves of invaders, each displaced in their turn, until the arrival of the Gaels—a people of Scythian descent who came to Ireland from Spain, having arrived there after long wanderings from Egypt, which they left at the time of the Hebrews'

30 *LHF* 42, p. 314: "Ipse pacificus, velut Salomon, quietus regnum obtenuit Francorum." For the contemporary use of such Old Testament parallels: Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 261–69. See also Dörler, "The *Liber historiae Francorum*," pp. 35–37. Note that the comparison rests on a single point of similarity between Dagobert and Solomon, not a general equation of their peoples.

31 Michael Clarke, "The *Leabhar Gabhála* and Carolingian Origin Legends," in *Early Medieval Ireland and Europe: Chronology, Contacts, Scholarship. A Festschrift for Dáibhí Ó Cróinín,* ed. Pádraic Moran and Immo Warntjes (Turnhout, 2015), pp. 441–79 at p. 444. For an outline of the parallels between the biblical story and the *Lebor Gabála* see R.A. Stewart Macalister, "Introduction," in *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, ed. and trans. R.A. Stewart Macalister, 5 vols (Dublin, 1938–56), 1:ix–xxxiv at pp. xxvii–xxviii.

departure. This Irish Exodus constitutes, for most scholars, a conscious application of the New Israel motif by the Irish Christians who compiled the text.[32]

The *Lebor Gabála* is a ferociously difficult text with which to work, existing in multiple manuscript recensions, all imperfectly brought together in a sprawling edition described as "woefully incomplete, riddled with errors, and all but impossible to read."[33] The Irish origin legend it records was probably originally two separate traditions, combined in the *Lebor Gabála*: one of multiple invasions (possibly drawing on pre-Christian Irish stories and concepts)[34] and the other including the story of exile from Egypt and the Gaels' subsequent long journey toward Ireland.[35] These elements came together finally in a compilation of the late 11th century, but much of the *Lebor*'s edifice consisted of spolia from much earlier material. Both traditions, for instance, existed by the early 9th century when they were recorded in the earliest version, the Harley recension, of the so-called *Historia Brittonum* (itself a fiercely complex and poorly edited text, unfortunately).[36]

The *Historia* recounted the story of the Gaelic Exodus as told by the "most learned of the Irish":

> When the children of Israel crossed through the Red Sea, the Egyptians came and pursued them and were drowned, as may be read in the Law. Among the Egyptians was a nobleman of Scythia, with a great kin, who had been expelled from his kingdom, and was there when the Egyptians were drowned, but did not join in the pursuit of God's people.

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32 John Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History 1 (Cambridge, 1994), p. 7; John Carey, "*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History of Ireland," in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. Helen Fulton (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48 at p. 37; Marie Therese Flanagan, "Strategies of Distinction: Defining Nations in Medieval Ireland," in *Nations in Medieval Britain*, ed. Hirokazu Tsurushima (Donington, 2010), pp. 104–20 at pp. 107–08; Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "Perception and Reality: Ireland c.980–1229," in *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 1, *600–1550*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 131–56 at p. 141.

33 R. Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part 1: The Growth of the Text," *Ériu* 38 (1987), 81–140 at p. 82. Essential guidance for dealing with Macalister's edition is provided by Scowcroft, "Growth of the Text"; R. Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*. Part II: The Growth of the Tradition," *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66; John Carey, *A New Introduction to "Lebor Gabála Érenn"* (London, 1993).

34 Carey, *Irish National Origin-Legend*, p. 9; John Carey, "Native Elementsin Irish Pseudo-History," in *Cultural Identity and Cultural Integration: Ireland and Europe in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Doris Edel (Dublin, 1995), pp. 45–60. See also Mark Williams, *Ireland's Immortals: A History of the Gods of Irish Myth* (Princeton, 2016), c. 4.

35 Carey, *New Introduction*, pp. 3–6. Scowcroft, "Growth of the Tradition," emphasizes the biblical models for both traditions.

36 See David Dumville, "Historia Brittonum: An Insular History from the Carolingian Age," in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. A. Scharer and G. Scheibelreiter (Vienna, 1994), pp. 406–34.

> The survivors took counsel to expel him, lest he should attack their kingdom and occupy it, for their strength had been drowned in the Red Sea. He was expelled and he wandered for 42 years through Africa.[37]

The Gaels were here associated with one of the key moments in Israelite history, without, perhaps, being integrated into it very well: their Scythian ancestor lived among the Egyptians without participating in the pursuit of the Israelites—not an enemy of God's people clearly, but not explicitly a friend either. A Scythian genealogy for the Gaels shows the influence of Isidore of Seville on Irish scholars rewriting their people's origin legend, but also sets the Irish apart from the Hebrews by descent.[38] Written into Old Testament history they clearly were, but they were not themselves God's people. Some elements of the story do, however, point towards a conflation of the Gaels and Israelites: the Egyptians' suspicion of the foreigners in their midst echoes Pharaoh's fear that the children of Israel would turn against the Egyptians unless enslaved[39] and the later growth of the Gaels in Spain is described in terminology directly taken from Old Testament accounts of the multiplication of the Israelites.[40] This specific phraseology is, of course, that of a Welsh scribe, albeit one with access to material both reflected in earlier Irish texts and containing Old Irish (which he could not understand)—the *Historia Brittonum* does, consequently, probably record genuine Irish material.[41]

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37 *Historia Brittonum* (Harley recension), ed. Edmond Faral, *La légende arthurienne: études et documents*, 3 vols (Paris, 1929), 3:5–62, 15, p. 13: "Si quis autem scire voluerit quando vel quo tempore fuit inhabitabilis et deserta Hibernia, sic mihi peritissimi Scottorum nuntiaverunt. Quando venerunt per Mare Rubrum filii Israhel, Aegyptii venerunt, et secuti sunt, et demersi sunt, ut in Lege legitur. Erat vir nobilis de Scythia cum magna familia apud Aegyptios, et expulsus est a regno suo, et ibi erat quando Aegyptii mersi sunt, et non perrexit ad sequendum populum Dei. Illi autem qui superfuerant inierunt consilium ut expellerent illum, ne regnum illorum obsideret et occuparet, quia fortes illorum demersi erant in Rubrum Mare, et expulsus est. At ille, per XLII annos ambulavit per Africam." See also David Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin Historia Brittonum" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1975), p. 177. I adapt the translation of the *Historia Brittonum* (composite text), ed. and trans. John Morris, *Nennius: British History and the Welsh Annals* (London, 1980), p. 21 (Latin at p. 62).

38 Carey, *Irish National Origin-Legend*, pp. 12–13.

39 See Exod. 1:9–10.

40 Compare *Historia Brittonum* (Harley recension) 15, p. 13: "et creverunt et multiplicati sunt nimis, et gens illorum multiplicata est nimis," with Gen. 47:27: "habitavit ergo Israhel in Aegypto … et multiplicatus nimis"; Exod. 1:7: "filii Israhel creverunt et quasi germinantes multiplicati sunt ac roborati nimis"; 1 Chron. 23:17: "filii Roobia [grandson of Moses] multiplicati sunt nimis"; and Ps. 106:38: "et benedixit eis et multiplicati sunt nimis." But this also calls to mind Gen. 18:20: "clamor Sodomorum et Gomorrae multiplicatus est et peccatum earum adgravatum est nimis."

41 Dumville, "An Insular History," pp. 426–32; Patrick Sims-Williams, *Irish Influence on Medieval Welsh Literature* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 69–70; compare St Patrick's three petitions at

The idea that the forerunners of the Irish spent time in Egypt was clearly reasonably widespread by the time of the Harley recension; two almost exactly contemporary Carolingian manuscripts with Irish connections include glosses stating that the Irish (*Scotti*) had their name from Scotta, the daughter of Pharaoh.[42] This idea goes further than the version of the story preserved in the Harley recension, not just associating the Gaels with Egypt but making them part Egyptian themselves—nonetheless, it takes them no closer to the Hebrews. Pharaoh's daughter may not have been meant to stir up memories of a piece of Isidorian exegesis in which she represented the Church of the gentiles (one of the glosses is noticeably negative, calling her a "slut"), but in any case the non-Israelite status of the Irish is clear.[43] The same is true of the vernacular poem on the origins of the Gaels ascribed to Mael Muru Othna (d. 887): this suggests that the Irish stirred up Pharaoh's anger by not participating in his persecution of 'the people of God,' and consequently feared enslavement in the tense aftermath of Pharaoh's death; despite this possible link with the Israelites, the poet foregrounded the gentile status of the Gaels—"Of the Greeks are we in our origin."[44] In the 12th century, Scotta entered into *Historia Brittonum* tradition also, as the Scythian noble was identified as Pharaoh's son-in-law.[45]

By that time, the first versions of *Lebor Gabála* existed. There the Scythian nobleman was named Nél, son of Fénius Farsaid, and he came to Egypt because of his knowledge of all the languages of the world after having been born at the Tower of Babel; it was his great-grandson who left Egypt at the time that Pharaoh drowned in the Red Sea. This account, that of the *m* recension, matches almost exactly that of the *a* recension, which also includes the name of Nél's son by Scotta: Gaedel—thus providing an explanation for both the Irish and Latin names for

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Historia Brittonum (Harley recension) 54, p. 37 with *Notae suppletoriae ad Tirechanum,* ed. and trans. Ludwig Bieler, *The Patrician Texts in the Book of Armagh,* Scriptores Latini Hiberniae 10 (Dublin, 1979), pp. 164–66, 52, p. 164. The biblical echoes (n. 40 above) disappear in a version of *Historia Brittonum* compiled in England in the 940s: *Historia Brittonum* (Vatican recension), ed. David Dumville, *The "Historia Brittonum,"* vol. 3, *The "Vatican" Recension* (Cambridge, 1985), 5, p. 70: "et creuerunt et multiplicati sunt; ac illorum gens multiplicata est ualde."

42 John J. Contreni, "The Egyptian Origins of the Irish: Two Ninth-Century Notes," in John J. Contreni, *Carolingian Learning, Masters and Manuscripts* (Aldershot, 1992), c. XVII, 51–54.

43 Isidore of Seville, *Quaestiones in Vetus Testamentum: In Exodum,* PL 73:287–322, 5.2, p. 288D (suggested by Scowcroft, "Growth of the Tradition," p. 21 n. 56); Munich, Staatsbibliothek, Clm 6411, fol. 24v (Contreni, "Egyptian Origins," p. 54): "Scotta fuit filia pharaonis et fuit meretrix."

44 Máel Muru Othna, "Can a mbunadus na nGáedel?," ed. and trans. James Henthorn Todd, *Leabhar Breathnach annso sis: the Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin, 1848), pp. 220–71 at pp. 224–25, 232–33.

45 *Historia Brittonum* (Sawley recension), ed. David Dumville, "The Textual History of the Welsh-Latin *Historia Brittonum*" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1975), pp. 587–666, 9, p. 633: "Iste gener Pharaonis erat, id est mas Scotte, filie Pharaonis, a qua, ut fertur, Scocia appellata fuit." See also *Historia Brittonum* (composite text) 15, p. 62.

the Irish.[46] Neither version included the reasons that the Gaels had to leave Egypt or linked the Irish to the Israelites during the Exodus. The names they gave the proto-Irish may, however, be significant: Fénius's surname, Farsaid, means Pharisee; his great-great-great-grandson is named Éber, probably inspired by the biblical Heber.[47] The narrative connection with the Old Testament Jews remained slight, but the forefathers of the Irish had undergone a degree of Hebraicization.

Probably early in the 12th century another version of the *Lebor Gabála* was compiled, the *b* recension.[48] This provided a much more detailed and elaborate version of the story of the Gaels in Egypt: Nél aided the Israelites in their escape from Egypt, thus arousing the hostility among the Egyptians that eventually led to the Gaels fleeing Egypt; to help the supporters of the people of God, Moses offered Nél an equal share of the Promised Land with the Israelites; Moses also healed Gaedel from a snakebite and prophesied that none of his descendants would ever be harmed by a snake and that the land they would eventually inhabit, the northernmost island of the world, would be completely free of serpents.[49] Ireland, in other words, became here itself a kind of Promised Land—a fitting home for those who had aided the children of Israel. The subsequent *c* recension sought to synthesize the different versions of the early history of the Gaels included in the *m*/*a* and *b* recensions, but effectively went with *b*'s version of the Gaelic Exodus.[50]

It would be a mistake to describe any version of the Irish origin legend as definitive, whether an early basic one, or a later more fully developed one. What surely matters is that the legend, including the parallels between the Gaels and the Israelites, was in a constant state of flux, growing, shifting, and adapting over time. Clearly a tendency to improve, or at least expand, the story over time existed, and this led to an increased emphasis on the righteousness of the Gaels, linking them to the Israelites more clearly and drawing out the implication that Ireland was a sort of alternative Promised Land. At the same time some biblical overtones were dropped from the narrative and some elaborations diluted the Hebrew appearance of the Gaels, by linking them to Pharaoh by marriage, for instance. The story of their wanderings after Egypt also developed from the fairly straightforward (and nigh-biblical) 42 years through Africa to a much grander adventure which Michael Clarke has shown drew on the classical reference

46 *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, ed. and trans. R.A. Stewart Macalister, *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, 5 vols (Dublin, 1938–56), 104–09, 2:10–16; see also *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (a recension), ed. and trans. John Carey, "Lebar Gabala: Recension I" (unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard University, 1983), pp. 82–85, 235–39.

47 Scowcroft, "Growth of the Tradition," pp. 20–21.

48 *Terminus post quem* = 1114: Scowcroft, "Growth of the Text," p. 97.

49 *Lebor Gabála Érenn* 118–25, 2:32–36.

50 Ibid. 143–50, 2:58–64; Scowcroft, "Growth of the Text," pp. 102–03.

points of other origin legends.[51] Taken together, these changes do not suggest that the compilers of the *Lebor Gabála* worked towards a clear goal of making the Irish origin legend conform to an ideal New Israel motif.

3 Sailing to the Promised Land

If the Promised Land entered late into the Irish origin legend, it is often seen as an early and important part of the *origo gentis* of their Insular neighbours, the Anglo-Saxons; what mattered in English origin stories seems not so much the long formative journey of the *gens* on the way to its present homeland, but the fact that that land had been conquered by a Germanic people who came over the sea.[52] If England was a promised land for the Anglo-Saxons, then like Canaan it had to be taken from its previous unworthy inhabitants by the swords' edge. This parallel has sufficiently struck modern scholars to inspire an influential argument that the early medieval English saw their originary migration as typologically paralleling that of the Israelites—that is, that the *adventus Saxonum* in some sense was the fulfilment or antitype of the Old Testament conquest of the Promised Land. For Nicholas Howe, this biblical parallel allowed Anglo-Saxon Christian clerics to justify and preserve their peoples' origin legend: they presented the history of Israel "as a model for the history of the Anglo-Saxons" and thereby "redeemed" the Anglo-Saxon origin legend;[53] the New Israel motif helped to transform the pagan history of the early English conquerors into an Old Testament preceding the Christian Anglo-Saxon present.[54]

Howe built on previous claims that the first English historian, Bede, had used the British writer Gildas to present an Old Testament understanding of the Anglo-Saxon invasions in which his people appeared as a New Israel, punishing the wicked Britons for their sins; recent work has critiqued this interpretation, showing how it strains the meaning of the sources and assumes some rather unlikely readings of Gildas by Bede and his contemporaries.[55] In

51 Clarke, "*Leabhar Gabhála* and Carolingian Origin Legends," pp. 458–75.

52 Barbara Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends," in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks,* ed. Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 15–29; Alex Woolf, "Imagining English Origins," *Quaestio Insularis* 18 (2018), 1–20.

53 Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, 1989), p. 22.

54 Ibid., pp. 72, 116–17.

55 Foundational for this theory is Robert W. Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain: From Gildas to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (London, 1966), cc. 2–3. For critique: George Molyneaux, "Did the English Really Think They Were God's Elect in the Anglo-Saxon Period?," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65 (2014), 721–37 at pp. 724–26; Jennifer O'Reilly, *St Paul and the Sign of Jonah: Theology and Scripture in Bede's "Historia ecclesiastica gentis*

other respects Howe's argument went well beyond scholarship before him: for instance, he read the nautical imagery in the Old English poem *Exodus*, not as an allegory for the Church, as was orthodoxy at the time, but as a way of linking Israel's journey from Egypt to the Promised Land to the migration myth of the Anglo-Saxons as conquerors coming from the sea; while his suggestions deserve consideration, most subsequent work argues that they hardly provide a complete explanation of all the poem's subtleties.[56] Nonetheless, despite the questioning of specific elements in his interpretation of the Anglo-Saxon origin legend, Howe's essential contention that Anglo-Saxons clerics (re-)modelled their native origin legend on that of Israel has continued to be popular: Andrew Scheil and Samantha Zacher have both adapted Howe's ideas.[57]

A key part of all these scholars' arguments is that the incorporation of the New Israel motif into the Anglo-Saxon *origo gentis* provided a hortatory rhetoric with which English Christian writers could address their present. The works of Alcuin, the Northumbrian scholar working in the late 8th century, first at the cathedral school in York and later at the court of Charlemagne in Francia, provide a classic example of this rhetoric. Alcuin expressed the idea that the pagan Anglo-Saxons ("the people who were to become God's") had won their lands in Britain as a consequence of the sins of the natives in his poem in praise of the church of York, possibly written sometime before he moved to the Continent.[58] But the viking raid on Lindisfarne in 793 occasioned his most passionate use of this idea: writing to the archbishop of Canterbury, in a letter shot through with biblical imagery, Alcuin pointed out that the Anglo-Saxons' ancestors had received Britain from God because of the sins of the Britons and that therefore contemporary vices ran the risk of disinheriting the English;[59]

Anglorum" (Jarrow, 2014), p. 6. For Gildas's use of the Old Testament: Thomas O'Loughlin, *Gildas and the Scriptures: Observing the World through a Biblical Lens* (Turnhout, 2012).

56 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, pp. 72–107. For a recent reading of the poem: Samantha Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon Verse: Becoming the Chosen People* (London, 2013), pp. 47–85.

57 Andrew P. Scheil, *The Footsteps of Israel: Understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, 2004), pp. 106–10, 143–91; Zacher, *Rewriting the Old Testament*, pp. 24–28.

58 Alcuin, *Versus de patribus, regibus et sanctis Euborincensis ecclesiae,* ed. and trans. Peter Godman, *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* (Oxford, 1982), ll. 71–79, p. 10: "Hoc pietate Dei visum, quod gens scelerata/ob sua de terris patrum peccata periret /intraretque suas populus felicior urbes,/qui servaturus Domini praecepta fuisset. … gens ventura Dei." Godman (ibid., pp. xlii–xlvii) has argued that the poem postdates Alcuin's move to Francia, but his arguments have not met with universal acceptance: e.g. Donald Bullough, *Alcuin: Achievement and Reputation* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 339–40. On these lines: Molyneaux, "Did the English Really Think They Were God's Elect?," pp. 731–32; Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, pp. 26–27; Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 147–48.

59 Alcuin, *Epistolae,* ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Epistolae 4 (Berlin, 1895), pp. 1–481, 17, p. 47: "Patres itaque nostri, Deo dispensante, licet pagani, hanc patriam bellica virtute primum

he called on the monks of Lindisfarne to imitate Judas Maccabeus who purified the Temple and freed the land from foreigners, while also identifying their sufferings with the prophet Joel's lament over the sufferings of Israel: "O Lord, spare thy people and do not give the Gentiles thine inheritance."[60] Similarly, his poem on the sack of Lindisfarne compared it to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and Romans, and Alcuin advised the king of Northumbria to read Holy Scripture to see that kings had lost their kingdoms in the past for sins very like those rampant in Northumbria in the 790s.[61]

Clearly, Alcuin believed that God had given the Anglo-Saxons their land and that he was prepared potentially to take it away as a consequence of their sins; the example of Israel, another kingdom established by God and subsequently threatened with annihilation because of its sins, obviously floated in the background when Alcuin wrote in response to the sack of Lindisfarne.[62] Nonetheless, a snapshot of his response, as I have given above, exaggerates the consistency and importance of the New Israel motif in this case. We should note, as Mary Garrison did brilliantly, that each of Alcuin's writings in the aftermath of 793 is an individual work, adapted to its specific audience.[63] Viewed in this light, the significance of Israel as a model rather fades in any analysis of the scholar's reaction to the viking raid, suggesting that the Anglo-Saxon origin legend was a less rhetorically powerful tool, and its association of the English with the Israelites less clear, than often assumed.

Alcuin directed his poem on the sack of Lindisfarne to the monastic community there as a work of consolation; his verses discuss the raid as part of a generalized, philosophical meditation on the changeable nature of the world and

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pagani possederunt. Quam grande igitur obprobrium est, ut nos christiani perdamus, quod illi pagani adquisierunt. … Legitur vero in libro Gildi Brettonum sapientissimi, quod idem ipsi Brettones propter rapinas et avaritiam principum, propter iniquitatem et iniustitiam iudicum, propter desidiam et pigritiam praedicationis episcoporum, propter luxoriam et malos mores populi patriam perdiderunt."

60 Ibid. 20, p. 57: "'Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo, et ne des hereditatem tuam gentibus, ne dicant pagani, ubi est Deus christianorum?' … Mementote Iudam Machabeum, quia templum Dei purgavit et populum a servitute liberavit extranea." Cf. Joel 2:17: "Parce, Domine, parce populo tuo; et ne des haereditatem tuam in opprobrium, ut dominentur eis nationes. Quare dicunt in populis : Ubi est Deus eorum?"

61 Alcuin, *Carmina,* ed. Ernst Dümmler, MGH Poetae Latini medii aevi 1 (Berlin, 1881), pp. 160–361, 9.41–52, p. 230; idem, *Epistolae* 16, p. 43.

62 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, pp. 20–28; Scheil, *Footsteps of Israel*, pp. 148–51; Samuel Cardwell, "'What Sort of Love Will Not Speak for a Friend's Good?': Pastoral Care and Rhetoric in Early Anglo-Saxon Letters to Kings," *Journal of Medieval History* 45 (2019), 405–31 at pp. 423, 429–30.

63 Mary Garrison, "The Bible and Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," *Peritia* 16 (2002), 68–84; Mary Garrison, "Alcuin's World through his Letters and Verse" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996), cc. 4–5.

the ephemerality of all human kingdoms. Alcuin devoted powerful lines to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon, but that constituted just one example from a history of suffering and political destruction which God permitted right up until the present time.[64] A brief mention of the abbot of Lindisfarne correcting sins at the end of the poem cannot counter the overall impression that the monastery's sufferings are "an encouragement as well as a warning," ennobling the good Christians who patiently suffer through them.[65] Similarly, Alcuin's letters to the monks of Lindisfarne tend to end on the point that the violence meted out on them was the act of a loving, not a judgemental, God: "God chastises every son whom he receives."[66] While Alcuin invited the monks to identify with Hebrew models, the historical framework he presented for understanding the sack of Lindisfarne was a universal one: Jerusalem, Rome, and the whole of Europe suffering from the Huns were all paralleled with the monks' experience.[67]

Contemptus mundi, the need to flee secular and material things, is the overarching theme of these works for a monastic audience; what never appears in them is a mention of God having granted their land to the Anglo-Saxons. The *adventus Saxonum*, and fears that contemporary morality will lead to its reversal, only features in letters directed at members of the clerical or secular elites. This suggests a targeted use of exhortation by Alcuin—indeed his emphasis on the security of the land being at stake in *Epistola* 16 reads very like an attempt to get King Æthelred of Northumbria to listen to what otherwise might have been an unappealing moralizing screed.[68] Even within these writings for the elite, however, there were noticeable differences. Gildas and the British experience of divine punishment Alcuin only invoked in letters to Kent, where he may have known his recipients had a copy of Gildas to hand.[69] The repurposing of Old Testament statements about Israel to the Anglo-Saxon situation only becomes really noticeable in a letter to Archbishop Æthelhard of Canterbury; Alcuin directed a lot of biblical language to the archbishop because the elect status of the clergy clearly mattered

64 Alcuin, *Carmina* 9.31–84, pp. 229–31. Garrison, "Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," pp. 77–78.

65 Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 414. Alcuin, *Carmina* 9.227–30, p. 235: "Si quid displicuit Christo iam cuncta videnti, / Moribus in vestris corrigite hoc citius, / Ut pius egregium conservet pastor ovile, / Ne rapidis capiat hoc lupus insidiis." Contrast this with the previous description of the dead monks as holy martyrs: ibid., 211–26, pp. 234–35.

66 Alcuin, *Epistolae* 20, p. 57: "Castigat Deus omnem filium, quem recipit" (cf. Heb. 12:6); also ibid. 21, 22, pp. 59, 60.

67 Ibid. 20, p. 57.

68 Ibid. 16, 17, 18, 104, 122, pp. 42–43, 47, 52, 151, 179.

69 Ibid. 17, 129, pp. 47, 192; Bullough, *Alcuin*, p. 415. Alcuin may have never actually read Gildas for himself: Garrison, "Alcuin's World," pp. 85–89.

to him.[70] His letters to kings and aristocrats show much less direct engagement with the Bible. King Æthelred should read Scripture, Alcuin declared, but also ancient history, and indeed the king should simply examine the fate of the world, including recent Northumbrian history in the fate of Lindisfarne itself. All this will teach him the lesson that kings and peoples were punished for their sins—perhaps a direct reference to Æthelred's own violent behaviour.[71]

Points of similarity did link Alcuin's writings to the sack of Lindisfarne: he offered the example of King Hezekiah's faith and the victory it won against heathen invaders to both monastic and lay audiences.[72] But the lack of any explicit mention of the Anglo-Saxon origin legend in writings for Northumbrian monastic communities must be significant. The diversity of Alcuin's responses to this one event suggests that not every audience found the origin legend rhetorically powerful, and not all that did necessarily privileged the parallel between the Anglo-Saxons and Israel which modern scholars have understood as key to the moralizing use of the story of the *adventus Saxonum*. This suggests that there was no culturally significant and commonly recognized New Israel motif that Alcuin could simply to pluck off the shelf to explain the sack of Lindisfarne.

4 Conclusion

The contemporaneous rise of origin legends and an interest in Old Testament Israel across a wide variety of early medieval societies has encouraged scholars to use a common terminology of the 'New Israel' in reference to many different peoples and texts. This in turn has led to the, often implicit, acceptance of an objectively existing New Israel motif which can explain the uses of the Old Testament in any given *origo gentis*. This chapter has sought to show that the reality was much messier. Not only was there no single model underpinning how the creators of an origin legend might bring their own nation closer to the original chosen people, but if we drop the belief in a New Israel motif 'out there' beyond the individual text,

70 Alcuin, *Epistolae* 17, pp. 47–48. Garrison, "Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," pp. 74–76; Molyneaux, "Did the English Really Think They Were God's Elect?," pp. 730–31; Gerda Heydemann and Walter Pohl, "The Rhetoric of Election: 1 Peter 2.9 and the Franks," in *Religious Franks*: *Religion and Power in the Frankish Kingdoms; Studies in Honour of Mayke de Jong*, ed. Rob Meens, Dorine van Espelo, Bram van den Hoven van Genderen, Janneke Raaijmakers, Irene van Renswoude, and Carine van Rhijn (Manchester, 2016), pp. 13–31 at pp. 24–25.

71 Alcuin, *Epistolae* 16, p. 43: "Qui sanctas legit scripturas et veteres revolvit historias et seculi considerat eventum, inveniet pro huiusmodi peccatis reges regna et populos patriam perdidisse"; also ibid. 18, p. 52. Garrison, "Alcuin's Interpretation of Current Events," p. 74; Bullough, *Alcuin*, pp. 414–15.

72 Alcuin, *Epistolae* 16, 19, 21, pp. 44, 55, 59.

and seek to make sense of the work on its own terms, then the engagement with ancient Hebrew history that we find is more ambiguous than usually assumed.

The author of the *LHF* certainly told part of his or her narrative in an Old Testament style but may not have had the Bible as the direct source for all scriptural language used, nor any clear ideological intent behind it. The Irish scholars who over long generations sought to bring their people's origin legend in line with the history they knew from the Old Testament, did so in an ad hoc manner which followed no set model of how to make the Gaels a New Israel. Alcuin could draw on the parallel between the Anglo-Saxons' conquest of their island homeland and the Hebrews' control of their Promised Land to demand a moral response to the viking raid on Lindisfarne, but he also varied his response to the same crisis in ways both subtle and dramatic depending on his audience. All these writings, and more, do reveal a common interest among early medieval authors in Old Testament Israel when writing about the origins of their own peoples. We could perhaps extract from them a vague and protean New Israel motif, but to do so would run the risk of missing the interestingly complex, ambiguous, and diverse ways these authors used the Old Testament.

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CHAPTER 11

Out-of-Scandinavia: New Perspectives on Barbarian Identity

Robert W. Rix

Origines gentium, or tales about the origins of nations, are known from a variety of medieval texts. Origin legends connected with medieval peoples (*gentes*, *populi*, *nationes*) were tools for strengthening group identity or for giving dynastic legitimacy to rulers. Sometimes, medieval historians repeated known legends that had circulated for a period of time; other times they made conjectures about the past based purely on spurious etymologies and liberal borrowings from histories about other nations. At all times, however, historians would make references to origins because mapping out a long pedigree raised both the cultural and political capital of the people. This chapter is concerned with medieval histories that trace origins back to a location in 'the North,' or, as is most often the case, specifically to what is named as 'Scandinavia.' Textual evidence shows us that this was an origin narrative reserved for peoples we would today classify as Germanic. Below, we will examine how an 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend first emerged in manuscript form in mid-6th-century Constantinople and trace how variations on this legend subsequently spread to the western and northern parts of Europe. The discussion will focus on the rationale behind the use of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend and the central themes connected with it.

1 'The North'

To enable an understanding of what was meant by 'Scandinavia' and 'the North' in the Middle Ages, it is necessary to first look at how geographical and geopolitical markers were conceptualized. The place name 'Scandinavia' was recognized in classical texts as a region in the extreme north of Europe. In his *Natural History* (late 70s C.E.), Pliny the Elder mentioned *Scatinavia* as an island located in the Baltic, while Ptolemy, about a century later, used the same name to refer to several islands east of the Cimbrian Peninsula (Jutland). Other sources speak of Scandinavia as a peninsula, which correlates somewhat better with a current understanding that includes the modern kingdoms of Norway,

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Sweden, and Denmark.[1] In the Middle Ages, 'Scandinavia' functioned not only as a geographical concept, but also as a cultural denominator. In the Old English poem *Beowulf* (composed between the 8th and the early 11th centuries), for example, the name *scedeland* (l. 19), alternatively *scedenig* (l. 1686), denotes a wider culture zone throughout which legendary Danish heroes could find fame and fortune, as well as dominate.[2]

As Christianity spread during the Middle Ages (with Scandinavian areas holding on to pagan beliefs longer than the rest of western Europe), a geopolitical sense of 'the North' crystallized, conceptually separating it from the rest of Europe inhabited by Germanic peoples. The anonymous Ravenna *Cosmographia* (probably compiled in stages between the 6th and the early 8th centuries) clearly distinguishes *patria Northomanorum* from *patria Germanorum*.[3] The location of the border to 'the North' came to have dynastic-political importance, as the pagan Danes rose to power and prominence during the 8th and 9th centuries. In the *Royal Frankish Annals*, an entry for the year 813 tells us that the Eider constituted "the border to the Northmen." However, other references in the annals may indicate that the border could expand southward at some periods as a result of Danish aggression.[4]

The sense of a distinct culture zone covering present-day Scandinavia is reflected in an interpolation in the Old English translation of Paulus Orosius' *Historiarum adversum paganos libri VII* (Seven Books of History against the Pagans). The interpolation consists of reports about Scandinavia from two seamen who came to the West Saxon king Alfred's court in the 890s, and the reason for its insertion is that 'the North' was not covered in Orosius's otherwise extensive history of pagan lands. In the reports, it is established that the dominion of the Danes began at the bottom of the Danish peninsula of Jutland. Both

1 Pliny, *Naturalis historiae libri XXXVII* 4.13, ed. L. Jan and K. Mayhoff, vol. 1 (Munich, 2002), 1:345; Claudius Ptolemy, *The Geography* 2.10, trans. and ed. Edward Luther Stevenson (New York, 1991), p. 65. See also Ludvig Rübekeil, "Scandinavia in the Light of Ancient Tradition," in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. Oskar Bandle, Lennart Elmevik, and Gun Widmark, 2 vols (Berlin, 2002), 1:594–604.

2 *Klaeber's Beowulf and the Fight at Finnsburg*, ed. John D. Niles, R.D. Fulk, and Robert E. Bjork, 4th ed. (Toronto, 2008), pp. 3 and 57. The context renders it highly unlikely that it should be a reference only to the small province of Skaane/Scania in southern Sweden (which happens to share its etymology with 'Scandinavia'), as some critics have claimed.

3 *Ravennatis anonymi cosmographia et guidonis geographica* 1.11, ed. Joseph Schnetz (Stuttgart, 1990), p. 10.

4 *Annales regni Francorum MGH SRG sub anno.* 808, 811, 813, 828, ed. F. Kurze (Hannover, 1895), pp. 126, 134, 138, 175. This and other translations, unless otherwise noted, are my own.

seamen name the trading settlement Haithabu (now in the German district of Schleswig-Holstein) as the southern terminus for their journeys.[5]

'The North' remained a bastion of pagan belief until the turn of the first millennium. Danes, who became the most conspicuous example of northerners, were therefore cast as an abject 'Other.' Several commentators would allegorize the bands of Danes who raided both Frankish territories and Britain in biblical terms by reapplying Jeremiah's verse about the enemy Chaldeans, "Out of the north shall evil break forth" (1:14), to describe the contemporary politics of violence.[6] Latin writers of Christian Europe would also regularly use the word *barbarus* about the Danes. This is a term that the German historian Reinhart Koselleck calls an "asymmetric counter-concept" because it is invariably used unilaterally to define those on the outside without the possibility of reciprocity.[7] However, when it came to tracing one's own origin to an ancient and legendary Scandinavia, the idea of the barbarian 'North' was transvalued, acquiring a number of positive significances. Thus, it is an observable paradox in medieval manuscripts that Christian writers readily represent 'the North' in reductionist, distancing, and pathologizing terms, while the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend produces a counterhistory of assertive self-ascription. In this respect, it is important to remember that the legend of 'the North' is divorced from the vicissitudes of contemporary history; it belongs to a past heroic era.

2 Origin Legends

Having examined how 'the North' was variously conceptualized, we will now turn to the 'out-of-Scandinavia' narrative as belonging to the genre of origin legends. Although national origins lie beyond the scope of living memory, and were often stories set in the distant past, the inevitable question is whether legends reflect any degree of historical truth. Or, in the present case, did ancestors of Germanic peoples really migrate from Scandinavia? Compared to other

5 Original text and translation into modern English in *Ohthere's Voyages: A Late 9th-Century Account of Voyages along the Coasts of Norway and Denmark and Its Cultural Context*, ed. Janet Bately and Anton Englert (Roskilde, 2007), pp. 40–59.

6 See Simon Coupland, "The Rod of God's Wrath or the People of God's Wrath? The Carolingians, Theology of the Viking Invasions," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 42 (1991), 538; and Robert Rix, *The Barbarian North in Medieval Imagination: Ethnicity, Legend, and Literature* (New York, 2015), p. 1.

7 Reinhart Koselleck, "Zur historisch-politischen Semantik asymmetrischer Gegenbegriffe," in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), pp. 211–59 at p. 211.

national legends in medieval histories that trace origins to either Trojan warriors or Old Testament figures, the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend has an air of plausibility about it. Since no substantial evidence in the form of archaeological finds has turned up, the most likely answer is that we are dealing with an 'invented tradition.'[8] But how were such origin legends kept alive? Whether a *Traditionskerne* (kernel of tradition) was upheld over centuries by small elites *or* origin legends were principally scholarly inventions of the scriptorium, employed in order to create a long pedigree for the nation, has been the subject of much discussion.[9] Without delving into the intricacies of this debate, it is clear that the interest in origin legends increased with the strengthening of aristocratic culture in post-Roman Europe. This gave rise to a new requirement to record national history in manuscript form, using the genealogy of royal families as *pars pro toto* for nations. When incorporated into manuscripts of national history, the origin legend not only had a function of affording the prestige of a long lineage, it also served a function in the power vacuum left by the fall of the Roman Empire. As the European ethnographic map underwent a process of reconfiguration, tales of ethnogenesis allowed medieval historians to trace the history of a new, disparate conglomerate to a single origin, in effect manipulating history to backdate the notion of a unified people.

An option that achieved some popularity was to trace a nation's ancestry back to the mythical Trojans. This legend had its roots in Roman tradition, but, from the early 7th century, it was adopted for the genealogy of the Franks and subsequently became the preferred archetype of ancestral history. In the first part of the 12th century, Geoffrey of Monmouth adopted it for the inhabitants of the British Isles, and, in the early 13th century, the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson included a Trojan origin story in his *Prose Edda*. The 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend shares a structural affinity with the Trojan ethnogenesis model. The Trojans were the enemies of the Greeks, so when a Trojan genealogy was invoked in Virgil's *Aeneid* (1st century B.C.E.), it was for the purposes of emphasizing a transfer of power and empire from the Greeks to the Romans. The 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend places origins outside the reach of the Roman Empire, thereby indicating a new dispensation in which erstwhile 'barbarians' take over rule in post-Roman Europe. Evoking the images of fearsome northern warriors that could be found in classical texts was a way to give expression

8 The term came to prominence (about a later period) in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger's seminal collection *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

9 See Andrew Gillet, "Ethnogenesis: A Contested Model of Early Medieval Europe," *History Compass* 4, no. 2 (2006), 241–60, and Walter Pohl, "Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response," in *On Barbarian Identity*: *Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Andrew Gillet (Turnhout, 2002), p. 223.

to the aspirations of peoples who still lived in a world order determined by frequent wars.

The particular reason for introducing an ancestral link to Scandinavia into national history may have varied. It is possible that dynastic marriages or other forms of elite contact with Scandinavia occasioned the use of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend in order to bolster a union between nations. But often the political expediency of associating one's people with martial prowess was probably sufficient reason. Finally, over the centuries, Scandinavian origins gradually assumed the status of standard legend for Germanic peoples, so starting out a national history in this way became a matter of course.

To understand the appeal of ancient Scandinavia, one must look at how it became encoded as a symbolic geography that bred sturdy and brave warriors. The self-elected marginality that medieval historians accepted when tracing origins to Scandinavia draws potency from tapping into a discourse we may name *Borealism*, i.e. a representation of 'the North' and its people in terms of recurrent patterns and stereotypes (cf. the later discourse of *Orientalism* as another form of typecasting).[10] One ethnographic commonplace was that northern bodies were hardened by a cold climate, in turn making them superior warriors. It is well known that such ideas about people in the peripheries of the known world were not based on objective observations, but often invoked to convey a moral or political lesson to readers at the centre. It is worth a suggestion that the idea of northern heritage also offset growing anxieties about softness and torpor, the concomitant evils of luxurious living that Germanic warrior elites were at danger to adopt. classical authors such as Livy, Cato the Elder, and Sallust among others had fiercely criticized Roman decadence, and the fear of succumbing to a similar fate was a well-established trope at the time Germanic historians collected material for their national histories.

Forging genealogical links to Scandinavia would imply that ineradicable qualities of strength, courage, and warrior fortitude were passed down the bloodline. But the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend is just the foundation stone of the larger architecture we find in medieval history writing. Works of national history would proceed to include legends of later national heroes, emphasize the embrace of Christianity (and how this afforded their leaders success on the battlefield), and generally extol the *gesta* (a word frequently found in titles of medieval chronicles), i.e. past "deeds" or "acts" of a people up until the time of writing.

10 For some elements of this discourse, see Christopher B. Krebs, "Borealism: Caesar, Seneca, Tacitus, and the Roman Discourse about the Germanic North," in *Cultural Identity in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. Erich S. Gruen (Los Angeles, 2011), pp. 202–11.

The use of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend cannot be discussed as an abstract narrative; it creates meaning only *in situ*, i.e. in the context of the longer texts in which it appears. Therefore, the following sections will examine how the legend was variously adapted to fit the changing fortunes of European history and the place of individual Germanic nations in this history.

3 Jordanes and the Goths

The thematic framing of Scandinavia as a place of ancestral origin is first found in Jordanes's history of the Gothic people, entitled *De origine actibusque Getarum* (The Origin and Deeds of the Getae), but commonly cited by its modern editorial title, *Getica*. At one time, the Goths had dominated vast areas of southern Europe, reaching from the Danube to the Don, and from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea, and they had successfully challenged the Roman military for centuries. Jordanes wrote his *Getica* in or shortly after 551 C.E. At this time, the Goths had recently surrendered to the Romans under Emperor Justinian. This ended what Jordanes claims was 2,030 years' history of the Goths as an independent people.[11] Jordanes was of Gothic descent and therefore well-suited to write the grand history of his nation. Yet it is partly a summary of a previous, now lost, account by the Roman historian Cassiodorus, and Jordanes was himself employed as a Roman official and bureaucrat in Constantinople. Thus, what *Getica* contains of heroic tales from the Gothic past must be read partly as Roman propaganda insofar as the Byzantine Empire wanted to bask in the glory of having conquered a "most valiant race [the Goths], which had long held sway" (*Get.* 313).

The first part of the *Getica* contains a description of the Goths' ancient homeland (at the time when they were called the *Getae*), which was "a great island named *Scandza*," placed in the "Northern Ocean" (*Get.* 9–16). Jordanes then narrates the legend that the Goths left *Scandza* in three ships under the leadership of King Berig. This was a migration to a place named *Gothiscandza* (*Get.* 24), a place name that cannot be identified on the map with any certainty. Jordanes incorporates some elements from traditional legends (that there were *three* ships is recognizably a feature with deep links to Germanic

11 The standard edition of Jordanes's text is *Romana et Getica*, *MGH AA* 5.1, ed. Theodor Mommsen (Berlin, 1882). Below, the translation used for citations is *The Gothic History of Jordanes*, trans. Charles Christopher Mierow (Princeton, 1915), sec. 313. References to Mierow's edition will henceforth be marked in parenthesis as (*Get.*), followed by section numbers.

folklore).[12] But the very detailed ethnographic data that he provides about the various nations that inhabit *Scandza* and their way of life clearly derive from ethnographic accounts and manuscript knowledge of northern peoples. Thus, the legend of the migration is an example of how some elements of oral material could be brought into the register and framework of what Andreas Heusler a long time ago called *Die gelehrte Uhrgeschicte* (the learned prehistory).[13]

The description of *Scandza* contains some interesting elements for analysis. The first thing to notice is that Jordanes does not present the Gothic homeland as a lost Eden; rather, life there is primitive, brutish, and backward. Yet there are also positive subtexts. Jordanes portrays the peoples of *Scandza* as hardy, industrious, and capable of prospering in the face of the constant struggle with a brutal and uncompromising nature, and the men are particularly proficient in the art of war. For example, one of the peoples inhabiting the island are the *Gautigot*[*i*], described as "a race of men bold and quick to fight" (*Get*. 22). Such images of fierce northern warriors were part of a relatively coherent conception of 'the North,' drawing on ideas from Hippocratic humoral medicine, in which cold climates are linked with warrior fortitude. As the Greek geographer Strabo writes: "in a disagreeable country everything tends to make men warlike and courageous."[14] Jordanes could find similar notions scattered throughout classical ethnographical writings by Tacitus, Caesar, Josephus, and Pomponius Mela, and they would be taken up not long after Jordanes by Isidore of Seville.[15] Despite such positive strokes in Jordanes's history, he also displays the studious detachment from the barbarian paganism and wildness appropriate for a Christian writer. Thus, *Getica* is best read as a text holding together multiple perspectives that reflect Jordanes's composite identity as both ethnic Goth and Roman bureaucrat.

As a communication levelled at a contemporary Byzantine audience, one may interpret Jordanes's account of *Scandza* as a version of what the historians A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas have called 'hard primitivism.' This was a discourse in classical literature associated with ideas of hardships as an ennobling feature of primitive life (to be distinguished from the notion of 'soft

12 See Axel Olrik, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in *International Folkloristics: Classic Contributions by the Founders of Folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes (Lanham, 1999), pp. 83–98.

13 Andreas Heusler, *Die gelehrte Urgeschichte im altisländischen Schrifttum* (Berlin, 1908).

14 Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo* 2.5.26, *Loeb Classical Library*, vol. 3, trans. H.L. Jones (Cambridge, MA, 1924), p. 487.

15 See the commentary section in Cornelius Tacitus, *Germania*, ed. J.B. Rives (Oxford, 1999), p. 129.

primitivism,' which is found in representations of a lost Golden Age of plenty).[16] 'Scythian' and 'Germanic' tribes (both broad descriptors used about peoples inhabiting northern lands) were seen as free from the insidious and corruptive influence of luxury—the unwelcome bedfellows of civilization, as many texts of Antiquity and the Middle Ages point out.[17] Arguably, Jordanes invokes this general theme several places in the later sections of *Getica*, but most unequivocally when he recounts how the Ostrogothic ruler Theoderic the Great chose to leave Constantinople to "seek a living by his own exertions, after the manner customary to his race, rather than to enjoy the advantages of the Roman Empire in luxurious ease while his tribe lived in want" (*Get*. 290).

Jordanes's sections on *Scandza* are also the history of ancient migration through successful conquest of European lands. He describes *Scandza* as "officina gentium aut certe velut vagina nationum," which Charles Christopher Mierow in his authoritative translation renders as "a hive of tribes or a womb of nations" (*Get*. 25). Yet a more apt translation of *vagina* could be "scabbard" (for a sword), which would fit with the martial register of the context. The migration from the island is also described as warriors coming "into the land of Europe" like "a swarm of bees" (*Get*. 9). The metaphor here implies a fierce army ready for conquest, as the bee analogy had been used in classical writing about the colonization of foreign territories.[18] With this legend of Europe subdued by a legion of warriors from the North, Jordanes created a model that later historians of Germanic nations could tap into, as will now be discussed.

4 The Dissemination of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' Legend

This section will provide an overview of the uses of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend after Jordanes. The central question is whether these were borrowings—either directly or indirectly—from *Getica* or whether they were origin narratives that arose independently of one another. From weighing up the internal evidence of references to Scandinavia in later manuscripts combined with

16 A.O. Lovejoy and George Boas: *Primitivism and Related Ideas in Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1935). For overtures towards defining the perceptual framework of "hard primitivism" in relation to Gothic tradition, see Patrick Amory, *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489–554* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 37.

17 For the classical tradition, see also Rhiannon Evans, *Utopia antiqua: Readings of the Golden Age and Decline at Rome* (London, 2008), esp. pp. 46–47, 111–13.

18 For these references, see A.J. Graham, "The Colonial Expansion of Greece," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 3, part 3, ed. J. Boardman and N.G.L. Hammond (Cambridge, 1982), p. 157.

what we know of the specific holdings of Jordanes's text in libraries of medieval Europe, the best theory is that *Getica* provided a template for the use of the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend. This was a narrative that would be bolstered and further disseminated with each invocation of it in manuscript histories. Such a pattern of appropriation was only possible because a sense of common Germanic ethnicity (based on observations of language, former pagan religion, and presumably recognizable elements of culture) was recognized in the Middle Ages.

The first example we will focus on is the history associated with the people known in medieval times as *Langobardi*, or *Longobardi* (the etymology of which is 'long-beards'), but today sometimes referred to as the Lombards. This people became conspicuous in the latter part of the 6th century when they entered northern Italy, conquering former Roman areas. The legend of Scandinavian origins first emerges in the Frankish chronicle attributed to 'Fredegar,' written *c.*660, but has later additions. The text mentions a homeland for the Langobards called *Scathanavia*, which is described as a land area between the Danube and the "Ocean Sea" (i.e. the border of water believed to encircle the world).[19] Another 7th-century text, *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (The Origin of the Langobards), correlates more closely with Jordanes's *Getica* in that it refers to the Langobards' original homeland (respectively called *Scadan*, *Scandanan*, or *Scadanan* in various manuscript recensions) as a northern island that was inhabited by many peoples.[20] Both texts on Langobardic histories draw on mytho-religious material from oral tales, but the idea and naming of Scandinavia is most likely a learned borrowing made possible by the fact that manuscripts of *Getica* were known in Frankish circles, as confirmed by catalogues of library holdings.[21]

The Langobardic migration story is repeated in Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum* (History of the Langobards) (*c.*780s-90s), a popular text in the Middle Ages with many surviving manuscript copies. Paul, who was born to a Langobardic family, wrote the text after the fall of the Langobard kingdom to Charlemagne, king of the Franks, in 774. Paul's history can therefore be seen to honour both his own Langobard nation and the Franks for defeating such a noble people. At the beginning of his history, Paul refers to the homeland of the proto-Langobards (the *Winnili*) as the island of *Scadinavia*, whose location

19 "Fredegar," *Chronicarum libri IV*, 3.65, *MGH SRM* 2, ed. B. Krusch (Hannover, 1888), p. 110.

20 *Origo gentis Langobardorum* c. 1, *MGH SRL*, ed. Georg Waitz (Hannover, 1878), p. 2.

21 See Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 39, 49, 56, 276.

is explained by drawing on classical geography.[22] Paul is aware of Jordanes's *Getica*, as he refers to the Goths as the most notable among the tribes on the island. An ethnic association with the once much-feared Goths and their erstwhile empire was evidently seen to raise a people's cultural and ethnic capital.

Furthermore, Paul takes advantage of rooting origins in Scandinavia by expanding on images of primordial strength, warrior prowess, and procreative fertility—in accordance with a long tradition of classical ethnographic ideas about 'the North.' The beginning of *Historia Langobardorum* is a long excursus on how cold climates promote bodily strength and fecundity. Northern climes are "much more healthful to the bodies of men," he writes, and Scandinavian climate enables people to reproduce at a greater rate—a contrast to those born in hot regions, which abound in diseases and are "less fitted for the bringing up of the human race." Paul further speaks of how "great multitudes of peoples spring up in the north," so that "the whole is, not improperly, called by the general name of *Germania*" (1.1), by which he draws on a spurious etymology with the Latin *germinare* (to germinate).[23] The enviable procreative powers are, however, also of some detriment as it is partially because of overpopulation (Paul also gives other reasons) that a group of proto-Langobards had to emigrate from *Scadinavia*. An image of ethnic fecundity is invoked again in relation to the migration heroes Ibor and Aio, whom Paul says were "in the bloom of youthful vigour and more eminent than the rest" (1.3). As founding fathers, they become a synecdoche for their descendants. In other words, an origin in Scandinavia has bestowed the Langobards with vigorous and productive bodies, the proof of which is that their present populous nation has developed from what was "but very few" migrants (1.7).

Another characteristic that became associated with the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend over time is its capacity to serve as a contrast to the fallen Roman Empire. As barbarian nations switched from a sub-Roman to post-Roman mentality, Scandinavia (which had never yielded to Roman imperialism) gained significance as an oppositional category. Such an idea is thematized in the legend connected with the Burgundians, an east-Germanic people, whose first mention of an origin in Scandinavia is found in the 8th-century hagiography *Passio s. Sigismundi regis* (The Passion of St Sigismund). A connection to legendary northern warriors may have helped to flag up ethnic and political-ideological opposition to Roman rulers. We are told that the Burgundians'

22 Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* 1.1–1.2, *MGH SRL*, ed. L. Bethmann and G. Waitz (Hannover, 1878), p. 48.

23 Paul would have found this etymology in Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX* 14.4.4, vol. 1, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), p. 132.

ancestors "departed from an island called *Scanadavia*, girded by the ocean sea" early in the 1st century C.E. After a migration, they were held in *burgi* (castles, fortresses) near the Rhine by order of Emperor Tiberius, as a result of which, they purportedly gained the name of Burgundians.[24] This humiliation is countered at the beginning of some recensions of the text in which there is a jubilant commemoration of a band of Burgundians who invaded Gaul, defeated the Romans, and subdued the few that survived.[25]

Passio s. Sigismundi regis is likely associated with the Carolingian Renaissance (8th-9th centuries), which saw a renovation of education, scholarship, and the church. A new ethnic assertiveness emerged in the wake of this, which found expression through a *translatio imperii* ideology, i.e. the notion that the 'barbarian' races were destined to take over the mantle as new world leaders after the fall of the Roman Empire. This discourse rose to prominence as the Carolingians gained political influence and became an imperial power. Early Frankish texts had traced the Franks' lineage back to Troy, but the Carolingians began to believe they could rival Rome in aspects of cultural life as well. The Carolingians' new confidence seems to have been propped up by identification with the Goths, who had successfully sacked Rome in 410. Agnellus, the bishop and historian of Ravenna, relates that Charlemagne, around the time when he received the title of Holy Roman Emperor (800 C.E.), took from his town a statue of the Gothic hero Theoderic and removed it to his court at Aachen.[26] This would have signified the inheritance of an *imperium*, since the Franks had achieved dominion in an area that once was under Gothic rule, stretching from the old Visigothic Barcelona in the west to Ostrogothic Rome in the south, but also added new areas up to the frontiers of the Danes in the north.

We see an increased interest in Gothic tradition, ancestry, and legend in Carolingian texts between 800 and 860. Freculph, bishop of Lisieux, for instance, was familiar with Jordanes's *Getica*, quoting it in his *Cronicorum tomi duo* (Chronicle in Two Books) (*c.*830). After relating the standard myth of the Franks' lineage back to Troy, Freculph proceeds with an alternative proposal: "other men insist that they [the Franks] had their origins on the isle of *Scanza*, the womb of nations, from which the Goths and the other Germanic nations

24 *Passio s. Sigismundi regis* c. 1, *MGH SRM*. 2, ed. Bruno Krusch (Hannover, 1888), p. 333. Another 8th-century text, *Chronicon universale – 741* c. 1, *MGH* SS 13, ed. Georg Waitz (Hannover, 1881), p. 4. copies this tale of Scandinavian origins with a slight variation in the place name (*Scatanavia*).

25 *Passio s. Sigismundi*, ibid.

26 Andreas Agnellus, *Liber pontificalis Ecclesiae Ravennatis* c. 94, *MGH SRL*, ed. O. Holder-Egger (Hannover, 1878), p. 338.

went forth, as the form of their speech indicate."[27] By this logic, supported by Jordanes's account, all Germanic-speaking peoples could trace their origin to an ancient northern homeland. There was an emergent interest in how the Frankish language was linked with the tongues spoken by the Goths and other Germanic peoples.[28] The theologian Rabanus Maurus, Freculph's friend, for example, proposed that the *Marcomanni* (a Germanic people north of the Danube) should really be called "Northmen" (*Nordmannos*), since all peoples speaking a Germanic tongue are descended from the North.[29] It is likely that the popularity of Jordanes's migration legend formed the backdrop for this statement.

That Frankish scholars came to identify Scandinavia as the original homeland of Germanic tribes may have been instrumental in securing wide acceptance of the legend among historians in Europe. A migration out of Scandinavia was claimed for the Saxons, a north-Germanic people, in Widukind of Corvey's *Res gestae Saxonicae* (The Deeds of the Saxons), completed in 968. However, Widukind is unresolved as to whether the Saxons descended from Alexander the Great's Macedonians or from the Danes/Northmen, and proceeds to quote Jordanes on the Goths issuing forth from a northern island to conquer European lands.[30] The latter made sense insofar as the history of the Saxon people was compiled after Saxony had become part of the Holy Roman Empire of German nations, which had its power base in East Francia. The pope's coronation of Otto the Great as emperor in 962 marked the German kings as successors to Charlemagne's old empire.

In Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum* (History of the Normans) (early 11th century), the legend of a migration from Scandinavia is applied to the Normans. However, there is much confusion between names and geographic locations, caused by attempts to collate and synthesize learning from a variety of sources. The lack of geographical consistency leads Dudo to mix up Jordanes's reference to a Scandinavian island with peoples and places taken from Roman and Greek sources. For example, Dudo attempts to locate *Scanza* in the "Scythian Sea" (Scythia was an area of central Eurasia that authors of

27 Freculphus Lexoviensis, *Chronicorum tomi duo* 2.17, *Patrologia Latina Database* 106, ed. J.P. Migne (Paris, 1864), col. 0967C-D.

28 See Matthew Innes, "Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 227–49.

29 Rabanus Maurus, *De inventione linguarum*, ed. J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Latina Database* 112, col. 1582.

30 Widukind, *Rerum gestarum Saxonicarum libri tres* 1.2, *MGH SRG*, ed. Paul Hirsch (Hannover, 1935), p. 4.

Antiquity had traditionally seen as 'the North'). A follow-on effect of this displacement leads Dudo to connect the Normans with Dacia (an area in classical times bounded in the south by the Danube): the *Daci*, called themselves *Danai* or *Dani*, who can trace their ancestry to the Trojan warrior Antenor (1.1–3). This is a confusion of names on the basis of which Dudo forges a link to the classical world through the Norman dukes' actual historical ancestors, the Danes (especially the 9th-century Danish warrior Rollo). More than any of the other texts discussed so far, Dudo betrays himself as an antiquarian trying to knit together a usable origin legend by synthesizing information from available manuscripts. A similar claim based on false etymology is made in Wace's Norman verse chronicle *Roman de Rou* (*c.*1160s), where it is stated that the Normans' ancestors fled the fires of Troy, and, led by the ruler *Dana*(*u*)*s*, settled in Denmark (ll. 157–70).[31]

In the late Middle Ages, a legend of northern origins seems to have become conventional furniture in the *origines gentium* genre. In relation to the Swabians, who settled in south-east Germany on the Elbe, we find a story of a migration from the North (although no specific place name is provided) in the short anonymous text *De origo gentis Swevorum* (The Origin of the Swebs) (mid-13th century), about a people settled in the Nordschwabengau, Saxony.[32] The Swedish 15th-century vernacular text *Prose Chronicle* draws on Jordanes's *Getica* with the purpose of establishing Sweden as first among Scandinavian nations.[33] This was a discourse later taken to the extreme in the Swedish antiquarian Olof Rudbeck's four-volume *Atlantica* (1677–1702), which draws heavily on Jordanes's migration legend to make bold claims: Swedish was one of the original world languages, and Sweden was identical with Atlantis. Finally, in the Benedictine monk Mavro Orbini's *Il regno de gli Slavi* (The Realm of the Slavs) (1601), the Slavs are said to descend from Japheth, Noah's son, whose progeny had migrated to Scandinavia, from which the Slavs would later move east.[34] Although the Slavs are not Germanic, a stopover in Scandinavia was probably included because Scandinavia as a place of origin had become *de rigeur* in histories of barbarian nations.

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31 Robert Wace, *Roman de Rou et des ducs de Normandie*, vol. 1. ed. Frédéric Pluquet (Paris, 1827), pp. 8–9.

32 *De origo gentis Swevorum* c. 5, *MGH SRG*, ed. Paul Hirsch (Hannover, 1935), p. 156.

33 *Sveriges Krönika vanligen kailad den prosaiska*, in *Småstycken på forn svenska*, ed. G.E. Klemming (Stockholm, 1881), pp. 219–20.

34 John V.A. Fine, *When Ethnicity Did Not Matter in the Balkans: A Study of Identity in Pre-Nationalist Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia in the Medieval and Early-Modern Periods* (Ann Arbor, 2006), p. 226.

As a note to the above survey of national histories, it should be added that the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend is not the centre of gravity in these texts. It may be nested within a larger Christian *Heilsgeschichte*, i.e. a salvation history of a nation redeeming itself from paganism and barbarianism. This does not mean that the northern past is therefore necessarily seen as shameful, rather historians may have thought that ethnic qualities of strength and fortitude could be harnessed in the service of Christian virtue and dedication. In any case, the spheres of war and putting your faith in God are intrinsically intertwined in the logic of medieval histories, as martial triumph on the battlefield is often seen as directly depending upon the standing of the leaders in the eyes of God.

5 Scandinavian Ancestors in Anglo-Saxon Texts

In Anglo-Saxon texts, several references to northern heritage can be found. In relation to the Germanic invasion of the British Isles, we know that there was likely a real connection to southern Scandinavia. Yet, as will become clear, there was a push to legendize this connection and align it with Jordanes's Gothic history.

A foundational text is Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (Ecclesiastical History of the English People) (*c.*731 C.E.), which contains an account of the Germanic invasion of Britain. Bede writes in chapter 15 that warriors of three tribes came from the Continent around the middle of the 5th century: the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes, who battled the Romanized Cambro-British population and established new Germanic kingdoms.[35] From the ethnonyms Bede uses, the Angles and the Jutes can be identified with places in southern Scandinavia, while other sources tell us that the Saxons were located in what is now northern Germany.[36] Bede's account of three tribes undoubtedly simplifies a much more complex history of invasion from the north of the Continent, but the number three is presumably chosen because it fits a narrative structure deeply ingrained in Germanic folklore (in fact, paralleling Jordanes's account of the Goths sailing in three ships from *Scandza* for conquest and settlement).

It is also interesting to look at Bede's further statement that "the royal families of many [English] kingdoms claimed their descent" from the stock of Woden (*HE* 1.15), a warrior god cognate of the Norse *Óðinn* in Icelandic documents.

35 Bede, *Ecclesiastical History* c. 15, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1972), p. 58.

36 See Rix, *Barbarian North*, pp. 80–115.

That royal houses of various English kingdoms traced their pedigree to this god is confirmed in the lists of royals (*stirpes regia*) included in the Cambro-Latin *Historia Brittonum* (The History of the Britons) (first compiled *c*.820). One of the primary objectives of such lists was to confer authority upon the present office holder by connecting him with a line of illustrious ancestors. But why Woden? We know that Woden was worshipped in pagan England, but it is possible that the inclusion of this god in royal genealogies took place *after* the Anglo-Saxons had converted to Christianity. This would be possible through euhemerism, i.e. an interpretative strategy proposing that certain warriors had been so powerful that they were mistaken for gods in primitive times. Embracing euhemerism would perhaps have provided Anglo-Saxon kingship with a charisma suitable for military rulers. In this respect, it seems that Woden was perceived as a particularly northern warrior. This is indicated in the ealdorman Æthelweard's 10th-century chronicle where Woden (mentioned as an ancestor of the West Saxon kings) is described as a figure whom the "northern peoples [*aquilonales*] … worship as a god even to the present day, that is the Danes [*Dani*], the Northmen [*Northmanni*], and the Swedes [*Suevi*]."[37]

Another way to link Anglo-Saxon royals to northern origins was through connecting them with the Goths. In the opening chapter of the monk and court biographer Asser's *Life of King Alfred* (late 9th-century), the king's maternal genealogy is traced to Oslac (Alfred's grandfather), who is said to have come from the Isle of Wight, i.e. one of the places where the Jutes settled according to Bede. Asser then proceeds to describe Oslac as "Gothic by nation, descended from the Goths and Jutes" (Gothus erat natione; ortus enim erat de Gothis et Jutis).[38] As is often the case in texts of a later date, we can see an attempt at syncretism. In this case, Asser combines information from Bede with Jordanes's legendary history of the Goths.

A significant and extensive reference to Scandinavia in Anglo-Saxon England is the poem *Beowulf*. The poem's action takes place "in bygone days" (in geardagum), before the Germanic invasion of Britain, and it is possible that the story of the Scandinavian peoples in the poem (perhaps specifically the Danes and the *Geatas*) were relevant because they were seen as Continental ancestors by royals or noble houses in Anglo-Saxon England. If we take the first line of the poem at face value, the indication is that a long tradition of legends about Danish heroes existed: "Listen! We have heard of the glory in bygone days / of the folk-kings of the spear-Danes, / how those noble lords did lofty

37 *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, 1.4, ed. Alistair Campbell (London, 1962), p. 9.

38 Latin text in *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, 1.2, ed. William Henry Stevenson (Oxford, 1959), p. 4.

deeds" (Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum þeodcyninga þrym gefrunon hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon).[39] That legends about Danish warriors circulated is confirmed by the anonymous Ravenna cosmographer, who refers to the work of three "Gothic philosophers," who had written about the peoples of the world and pointed to the Danes as "men more swift than all other nations." Following this piece of information is the statement that a eulogy to past heroes would be lacking if it did not also extol the virtues of the Danes.[40]

In the prologue to *Beowulf*, part of a presumably oral tradition about ethnogenesis is given: we are told that a good and glorious king named *Scyld Scefing* arrived as a foundling in a boat on Danish shores and subsequently becomes the first in the Danish line of legendary kings known as *Scyldingas* (ll. 1–11). This figure seems to have been adopted in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (in the entry for the year 855), where we find reference to *Sceldwea* (MS A)/*Scyldwa* (MS B), who is a forefather in the line of West Saxon kings (ten generations prior to Woden).[41] The legend of a Scandinavian foundling king is later found in William of Malmesbury's early 12th-century *Deeds of the English Kings*. The king's name here shifts to *Sceaf*, and his northern provenance is yoked to information taken from Jordanes's *Getica*:

> Sceaf, they say, landed on an island in Germany called Scandza mentioned by Jordanes, the historian of the Goths, as a small child in a ship without a crew, sleeping with a sheaf of wheat laid by his head, and hence was called Sheaf. The men of that country welcomed him as something miraculous and brought him up carefully … The name of the region is Old Anglia, and it was from there that the Angles came to Britain; it lies between the Saxons and the Goths [*Gothos*].[42]

The passage is testimony to the increasingly liberal synthesizing of sources that took place as historians attempted to reconstruct a narrative of national origins. Here, Jordanes's *Scandza* legend is the ticket to go further back in Anglo-Saxon history than Bede had done. This was made possible through a confusion between Jutes and the Goths, which William probably took over from Asser's biography of King Alfred.

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39 *Beowulf: A New Verse Translation*, trans. R.M. Liuzza (Peterborough, ON, 2000), p. 53.

40 *Ravennatis anonymi cosmographia*, p. 53.

41 *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. Tony Jebson, available at http://asc.jebbo.co.uk/. Accessed 21 June 2019.

42 William of Malmesbury, *Gesta regvm Anglorum: The History of the English Kings* 2.116, vol. 1., ed. and trans. R. A.B. Mynors, R.M. Thomson, and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), pp. 176–77.

6 Importing Legends to the North

Having examined references to 'the North' in Continental and Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, this section will look at the emergence in the Nordic countries of some of the legends that have been discussed above. Ironically, evidence suggests that the legends of illustrious Scandinavian ancestors were imported as part of the dynamic European exchange of texts and ideas.

The figure of Scyld/Sceaf, the northern foundling king in Anglo-Saxon texts, makes an appearance in the work of the Icelandic historian Snorri Sturluson. In the prologue to his *Prose Edda* (*c.*1220s), he tells us that a figure named *Skiold* (cognate of *Scyld*) became ruler of *Iotland* (Jutland), and that this king was the ancestor of the famous line of Danish kings known as *Skioldungar* (cognate of the *Beowulf*-poet's *Scyldingas*).[43] *Skiold* is said to be the son of *Voden*, who, Snorri explains, is the same figure the Icelanders know from Norse mythology as a war god. The v-form of the name indicates that the source was probably an Anglo-Saxon text. In fact, an Icelandic manuscript with a list of Anglo-Saxon kings has been discovered, and it was probably a recension of such a list that Snorri used.[44] The most important centre for missioning Christianity to Norway and Iceland was England, which would explain the transmission of Anglo-Saxon texts.

In Denmark, the oldest surviving reference to *Skjold* as a national king can be found in Sven Aggesen's *Brevis historia regum Dacie* (Short History of the Kings of Denmark) (*c.*1180s). Interestingly, Aggesen gives the impression that legends of *Skjold* and his line of kings were not current in Denmark but borrowed from Icelandic sources: *Skjold* was "the first after whom kings were called Skjoldunger in the poetry of the Icelanders."[45] That a legend of *Skjold* and his progeny was not a narrative previously known in Danish legend is further substantiated by *Chronicon Lethrense* (*c.*1170), the oldest surviving Danish record of legendary kings, which has no mention of this figure. Thus, the most likely explanation is that *Skjold* is adopted from Anglo-Saxon tradition by way of Icelandic intermediaries.

Such appropriation of legend was made possible as the need to write down ancestral history came into its own in Scandinavia during the late 12th and early

43 *Prologus*, c. 4, in *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar – udgivet efter håndskrifterne af Kommissionen for det Arnamagnæanske Legat*, ed. Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen, 1931), p. 6.

44 Anthony Faulkes, "The Genealogies and Regnal Lists in a Manuscript in Resen's Library," in *Sjötíu ritgerðir helgaðar Jakobi Benediktssyni 20. júlí 1977*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Einar G. Pétursson, and Jónas Kristjánsson (Reykjavík, 1977), pp. 177–90.

45 Sven Aggesen, *Brevis regum Dacie*, in *Scriptores Minores Historiæ Danicæ Medii Ævi*, vol. 1. ed. M.Cl. Gertz (Copenhagen, 1917–22), p. 95. For an English translation, see *The Works of Sven Aggesen: Twelfth-Century Danish Historian*, trans. Eric Christiansen (London, 1992), p. 49.

13th centuries. Historians, as we have seen it above, readily lifted material from sundry manuscript sources to construct a coherent national legend. This was seen as just as legitimate a method as relying on oral legends. Nonetheless, the synthesizing of material caused certain problems, as several imported strands were seemingly incompatible. In the oldest surviving recension of the Danish translation of the *Annales Ryensis* chronicle (*c.*1400), the scribe is unresolved as to whether the Danes came from "the land of the Goths and travelled to the land which is now called Denmark," or whether they descended from the Greeks.[46] The first option leans towards Jordanes, whereas the second claim indicates that the chronicler is relying on Dudo of Saint-Quentin's history of the Normans.

Most prominent among Danish writers establishing a prehistory for Danish kings was Saxo Grammaticus. His chronicle *Gesta Danorum* (Deeds of the Danes) (early 13th century) takes up the figure of *Skyoldus* (cognate of *Skjold*/*Scyld*), whom he describes as an exemplary king.[47] Yet he is not the first Danish ruler, which is an honour given to *Dan*, whom Saxo gives the role of foundational figure for the kings of Denmark. Interestingly, Saxo includes a link to the Anglo-Saxons by making Dan's brother, *Angul*, the founding father of the English (1.1.1–3). Saxo refers to Bede in his history, for which reason we may deduce that *Angul* is likely a linguistic sleight-of-hand based on Bede's account of the invading tribe who were said to hail from Anglia ("hoc est de illa patria, quae Angulus dicitur") (1.15). Saxo would have recognized Anglia as the name for the peninsula of Schleswig-Holstein, which was under Danish rule at the time.

Saxo's appropriation of migration legends from other traditions does not stop here. In the opening chapter of his chronicle, he also mentions Dudo of Saint-Quentin, who had provided the Normans with an origin legend leading back to a mythical *Scanza*. In Book eight, Saxo refers to Paul the Deacon's Langobardic history. However, he renegotiates Paul's legend of the Langobards' homeland in *Scadinavia*, so that this now is a migration out of Denmark. Subsequently, Saxo describes many of the Langobards' adventures until the time when they finally establish themselves as lords in Italy (8.13), after which he loses interest in them. From this point, these erstwhile compatriots can longer be regarded as Danes.

We can see from these examples that Saxo's history is guided by the belief that the greatness of a people is to be assessed in proportion to the number of

46 "Prolog," *Rydårbogen*, E don. Var. 3, 8vo. Available at https://tekstnet.dk/rydaarbogen-edv3/metadata. Accessed 21 June 2019.

47 Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. J. Olrik and H. Ræder (1931). Digitized by the Danish Royal Library. Available at http://www2.kb.dk/elib/lit/dan/saxo/lat/or.dsr/index.htm. Accessed 21 June 2019.

branches of kings and heroes that could be counted on the family tree. Thus, Saxo rather liberally reconfigures legendary material from European manuscript tradition in the service of Danish history. But he also innovates by making *Dan* an autochthonous king (i.e. he has not migrated from somewhere else), insisting that other European aristocracies are derived from Danish origins—this is "even though [*quamquam*]," Saxo avers, the historian Dudo had claimed the Danes had sprung from the *Danai* (1.1). In other words, Saxo wants to represent the Danish line of kings as foundational for all subsequent European nations.

7 Conclusion

There were several, often overlapping, reasons for tracing one's national origins to the ancient North. One purpose was to flag up one's (ethnic) immunity to luxury, emasculating softness, and other ills believed to encroach on peoples who had adopted civilized living. Since the Roman Empire had never conquered the northernmost parts of Europe, the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend could be pressed into the service of counteracting Roman lapses from warrior ideals. In extension of this, the idea of *translatio imperii* could be erected on the idea that the former 'barbarian' enemies of Rome were now replacing the Romans as new rulers of Europe.

The first extant text that mentions an 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend is Jordanes's *Getica*. As is proposed in this chapter, Jordanes's narrative of the itinerant Goths itself became migratory, drifting from one cultural context to another in pace with the increased reading and copying of manuscripts. If the legend of Scandinavian origins was first recorded in mid-6th-century Constantinople, the extreme south-east corner of Europe, it travelled through Europe and Britain in various guises to eventually make its way into Icelandic and Danish national histories in the late 12th and early 13th centuries. Thus, ironically, the 'out-of-Scandinavia' legend became a *topos* of early European culture, whose transmission moved in the opposite direction of the imagined migration of peoples that it describes.

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CHAPTER 12

Oral Tradition and Origin Legends

Shami Ghosh

As origin legends are by nature narratives about the distant past, and since the distant past of most peoples in medieval western Europe was a preliterate past, modern scholars have often claimed a derivation from oral tradition for narratives of origin. Indeed, some of the authors of the extant written narratives—for all origin legends from the Middle Ages are known to us only in written form—also explicitly suggest that they used one or more oral sources; more frequently, these stories are composed in what some scholars have taken to be a reflex of an 'oral style,' leading many to believe that they must derive from some sort of oral tradition. This chapter shall focus primarily on the ways in which oral tradition might be and has been defined and how matter from such a tradition might be identified in the written sources; I shall then provide examples of two narratives and what they can and cannot tell us about oral tradition and origin legends in the early Middle Ages, and conclude with some reflections on the difficulties of separating oral from written tradition in our sources, and indeed the desirability of doing so.

1 What Is Oral Tradition?

While the first word of the phrase 'oral tradition' might appear to be straightforward, in fact both components of this term are problematic in the context of the European Middle Ages, albeit in different ways and to different degrees. We cannot hear medieval people speaking or reciting or singing their oral traditions: there is no extant medieval *oral* tradition. Whatever oral traditions might once have existed are accessible to us only through the intermediary of the *written* word. This might appear to be too obvious to be worth repeating; but it is important always to keep one likely consequence of this fact in mind: the possibility of something happening in the process of transfer from word of mouth to parchment and ink. *There is no way of knowing how close to or distant from a (lost) oral tradition the (extant) written text is*. A further aspect of the transformation of medium from oral to written is often also a translation from a vernacular language into Latin, or into a different register or form or dialect of the vernacular, or even from one into another vernacular. Once

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again, we must always be alert to the possibility of changes occurring in this process as well, regardless of whether or not this translation took place orally and was then converted into writing, as opposed to the act of translation being co-temporal with the act of writing.

These caveats regarding the orality of medieval oral traditions insofar as we can access them are reasonably straightforward. The term 'tradition,' however, raises further complications. Is oral tradition only material that is cast in some sort of stylized, more or less strict form (for example, alliterative verse)? Do oral reports (from eyewitnesses to events), memories of old people, court gossip, hearsay, or similar informal forms of oral narration all count equally as 'oral tradition'? In what form must a narrative of origins be received by the medieval writer for modern scholars to consider that written origin legend to be based on oral tradition? What if the source of the narrative was an informal oral report of some sort that was then transmitted in writing and became a part of a written tradition, available to us in multiple versions of different dates: was the original report already 'tradition,' or is there a difference between (a) the oral report, and (b) a later 'oral tradition' arising from it, and (c) the written traditions that interact with the oral one? What if narratives of the past are passed on orally, but are themselves originally based (at least partly) on written records?

Opinions differ with regard to these conundrums; as a general rule (there are, inevitably, always going to be exceptions), I do not believe that there is anything to be gained from an overly rigid approach, since the questions regarding different kinds of oral sources, their transmission (orally and in writing), and the transformations that might have occurred, are almost inevitably not amenable to answers because we cannot access any oral narrative *as* oral narrative. From an analytical perspective, there is something to be gained from differentiating between 'oral tradition' on the one hand, and 'oral sources' on the other. The former's basic characteristic (apart from being orally communicated) is that it has been passed on from one generation to another, and is therefore thought to be of enough value to be so transmitted over time, whereas the latter comprise simply some kind of information passed on by word of mouth. In practice, distinguishing between these two categories is not, however, easy and may not even really be possible in many or most cases. Thus even though such a distinction might appear useful, the extent to which it adequately represents the state of both our knowledge and our ignorance based on the extant sources is often debatable, so that we might prefer to choose one term or another for *all* putatively originally oral material about the past in our written sources.[1]

1 See also the position I set out in *Writing the Barbarian Past: Studies in Early Medieval Historical Narrative* (Leiden, 2016), pp. 22–23 et passim, where I made a clear distinction between 'oral

One approach to these issues is to follow the lead of those who work with living oral traditions today, namely anthropologists who rely on fieldwork collecting oral traditions of various kinds to come to an understanding of how living cultures preserve, propagate, and potentially also transform narratives about their origins and history. Jan Vansina's monograph *Oral Tradition as History*, although now over three decades old, can serve as one useful guide to what might be encompassed within the term 'oral tradition.'[2] In distinguishing above between 'oral tradition' and 'oral sources,' I draw on Vansina's definition: "oral traditions [are] verbal messages which are reported statements of the past beyond the present generation."[3] As even Vansina points out, others in his field can be more restrictive in their definitions; for the purpose of discussing origin legends, it seems fair to state that the "reported statements of the past" should be widely known and valued; an oral tradition of origins that is not shared by most of the people about whose origins it claims to be is probably of dubious value to modern historians seeking to understand the nature and role of early medieval origin legends.

Vansina, however, like all anthropologists, works with contemporary societies, and is thus able to make a distinction between oral traditions as reports about the past, and oral sources used by oral historians as reports about contemporary events. But it is in the nature of our enterprise as medievalists that we cannot—unlike anthropologists—interrogate any oral informants as to how valued their stories or gossip might be, or how ancient it is, or indeed investigate the extent to which any kind of narrative material is in widespread circulation (with however much variation). It is therefore impossible to determine whether all potentially oral sources in our written records are 'tradition' in the sense of something that is a valued part of the historical or memorial customs or practices of a given society in a given period and, crucially, has been so for some time.[4] However, if we accept that for a narrative to be a 'tradition,' it must have been passed on at least over one generation, then an eyewitness report of a contemporary event should not be accepted as oral tradition. But at what point can we say that the narrative we have received in written form,

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tradition' and 'oral sources,' judging the latter to be preferable because of the difficulty of knowing when the former term, in a strict definition, could ever be applicable. I acknowledge, however, that this distinction can seem to be confusing.

2 Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison, 1985), pp. 3–32 et passim. From the anthropological perspective, and particularly with regard to poetic traditions, see further the fundamental works of Ruth Finnegan: *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance, and Social Context* (Cambridge, 1977); eadem, *Oral Traditions and the Verbal Arts: A Guide to Research Practices* (London, 1992).

3 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. 27.

4 See here definitions I.1.a, I.1.c, and I.3.a s.v. "tradition," in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

which was written generations after the reported events, became 'tradition'? And indeed, how do we know that it was not created by putting together written sources and oral gossip of some sort—that there was no 'oral tradition' containing this narrative before the time it was written down? Given that in general, our source base is rather sparse, how can we know that the tradition reported was widely accepted and valued—particularly since, in many cases, it is evident that origin story is somewhat contested? Given that these sorts of questions are generally not amenable to particularly convincing answers, we might wish to be cautious in claiming for 'oral tradition' any extant origin legends from the Middle Ages.

A stimulating example of a flexible approach to the literate use of oral sources (albeit not with respect to origin legends) is Matthew Innes's study of Notker of St. Gall's life of Charlemagne.[5] Notker was born a generation after Charlemagne's death; he wrote influenced by Einhard's biography, composed just after its subject's death by a writer who had known Charlemagne personally. However, Notker's account is quite consciously different from that of Einhard, and draws on narratives and anecdotes from family members that were not—as far as we can tell—transmitted in any kind of formal, epic, or poetic narrative, but were nevertheless clearly preserved within the family: oral tradition, in other words, as long as one is willing to be slightly flexible about what that term could mean, and accept that it might be a tradition only of a particular part of specific kin-group.[6] Yet it is impossible, as Innes points out, to differentiate between 'oral' and 'literate' strands of Notker's historical consciousness: Notker was an impressively erudite monk, educated very much in the classical tradition, and there is no way of distinguishing clearly between an 'oral' and 'literate' approach to the past in such contexts, since there was a constant interaction between these spheres both within the monastic community as a whole, and within the minds of individuals such as Notker. It should also be noted that writers could be influenced by written narratives that were in turn themselves based on 'oral tradition' of some sort, and thus were couched in some sort of 'oral style' (many of the books of the Bible are outstanding

5 Matthew Innes, "Memory, Orality, and Literacy in an Early Medieval Society," *Past and Present* 158 (1998), 3–38.

6 In this case, obviously it is of some importance that this is the kin-group of one of the emperor's wives; but this need not represent the perspective of more than one segment of the society in question. This leads inevitably to ask: whose oral tradition? That of one family related to the Frankish emperor? Or that of the Franks? I pose these questions not as a critique of Innes (who does not operate with the term 'oral tradition'), but rather to point out the difficulties that one encounters at every step when attempting to work on medieval oral traditions; *mutatis mutandis*, one might ask the same questions in relation to origin legends.

examples of such texts): we cannot be too rigid, therefore, in delineating a boundary between an oral and a written means of producing history and use it to distinguish between those narratives (or portions of narratives) in our written evidence that are derived from oral tradition, and those that are not.

Another approach to medieval oral tradition can be drawn from certain strands of (primarily) literary scholarship (normally the study of poetry, and specifically of epic) that have sought to identify elements of an 'oral style' and thus to demarcate reflexes of oral tradition within written narratives.[7] Perhaps the most carefully worked out (and also rigid) method is that derived from Oral-Formulaic Theory or Oral Theory. First developed by the classicist Milman Parry and developed into its most influential form by his student Albert Bates Lord, this theory was initially an attempt to demonstrate that oral tradition was the basis of the Homeric epics, and was grounded on analyses of living oral traditions in Bosnia.[8] Parry and Lord found that the Homeric epics were characterized by the repeated use of phrases they termed 'formulaic,' and in their study of oral performances of epic traditions in Bosnia, they discovered that formulaic phrases were used variably to modify and increase or decrease the length of the 'same' epic. Oral tradition is, according to this theory—which has had innumerable adherents and has also attracted plenty of critique—not memorized, extremely mutable (though the core narrative elements do not change), and incompatible with literary tradition; texts in which formulaic elements dominate or are prominent are thus easy to identify as recordings of oral tradition.

Following this theory, it should be easy to determine which origin legends derive from oral traditions; but in fact very few would appear to do so in their extant forms if one were to adhere strictly to these criteria. There are in any case a number of further problems with the theory; I mention here only three of the major issues: (a) written literature can also be very formulaic; (b) oral poetry (by which I mean poetry that is recorded and transmitted orally) need not be formulaic; (c) there is plentiful evidence of much interaction between orality and literacy in medieval culture.[9] More recent studies of medieval oral poetry have

7 The following paragraphs offer what is necessarily an extremely brief, even somewhat superficial overview of a subject that has filled scores of volumes of scholarship, plentiful references to which will be found in the recent and important works cited below.

8 Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA, 2000).

9 Important early responses to the application of oral-formulaic theory in medieval studies are provided by Michael Curschmann, "Oral Poetry in Mediaeval English, French, and German Literature: Some Notes on Recent Research," *Speculum* 42 (1967), 36–52; idem, "The Concept of the Formula as an Impediment to Our Understanding of Medieval Oral Poetry," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 8 (1977), 63–76. See further the stringent critique in D.H. Green, "Orality and Reading: The State of Research in Medieval Studies," *Speculum* 65 (1990), 267–80.

engaged with some of these critiques and are now less concerned with identifying 'oral tradition' or indeed any kind of orality in medieval written texts, but rather with considering what the meaning of any sort of oral background to those texts might be, and what we might be able to infer about the oral cultures of medieval Europe from the written material that survives.[10] Few literary scholars today would insist on a strict demarcation between 'oral/formulaic' and 'literate/non-formulaic' in the manner of Lord and the medievalists who first applied his theory to this period, though many still hold to the importance of formulaic phrases as a means of identifying an oral-traditional background in extant written works. Some of the most sophisticated recent approaches have combined the insights gained from studies of living oral traditions (variously defined) with those of the older, resolutely literary scholarship on texts that are now generally agreed to derive from oral tradition in some manner, and this more flexible approach is, I find, very stimulating (though it has not had quite the impact it deserves); and it will, to my mind, be the most fruitful way of dealing with the problem of medieval oral tradition going forward.[11]

This older school literary of scholarship—exemplified most importantly (at least for the older Germanic languages) in the work of Andreas Heusler, as well as in the works of Hector Munro Chadwick and Maurice Bowra—did not deny an oral background to the extant historical poetry, but was less concerned with identifying oral tradition, focusing rather more on the processes that (a) were the catalysts for the production of narratives, and (b) the literary reshaping of these narratives.[12] These theories need not be entered into in any detail here, concerning as they do the processes by which simpler oral genres were expanded into more complex literary ones, and the transformation of historical events into less-historical poetry;[13] what is more important is a type of modern scholarship influenced by literary studies of this kind without being solely literary, but also historical (in the disciplinary sense) that has tended to identify a background of orality more by means of (often rather vaguely defined) stylistic

10 For a survey that includes a wide range of approaches, see Karl Reichl, ed., *Medieval Oral Literature* (Berlin, 2012).

11 Of particular importance here are the works of Karl Reichl, of which I cite the most relevant and stimulating for present purposes: *Singing the Past: Turkic and Medieval Heroic Poetry* (Ithaca, 2000).

12 See Andreas Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, 2nd ed. (Potsdam, 1943); H.M. Chadwick, *The Heroic Age* (Cambridge, 1912); and C.M. Bowra, *Heroic Poetry* (London, 1952).

13 For more detailed discussion of these issues, see Joseph Harris, "Older Germanic Poetry," in *Medieval Oral Literature*, ed. Karl Reichl (Berlin, 2012), pp. 253–78 at esp. pp. 257–58, 268–72 (on Heusler); and Shami Ghosh, "On the Origins of Germanic Heroic Poetry: A Case Study of the Burgundian Legend," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 129 (2007), 220–52.

elements such as an elevated register, alliteration, a focus on dramatic scenes with few characters and the use of simple direct speech, a concentration on gestures, objects, and symbolic acts.[14] Such characteristics, however, need not necessarily betray any sort of direct link to an oral tradition any more than the use of formulaic language, and certainly one must be careful not to overstate the oral versus the literate influence because of them. One must always bear in mind that classical historians and the Bible also recorded oral narratives, and presented *written* models of stories and scenes for medieval writers that contained all the supposedly oral characteristics identified by modern scholars.

All of the means of identifying and studying oral traditions, it will be apparent from the discussion above, bring with them different sets of problems, and do not necessarily resolve the question as to how one might identify a part of a text—and let us recall once again that the written word is all we have—as being derived from oral tradition, even if we could reach some consensus on what 'oral tradition' is supposed to mean. To compound these issues and highlight the problems involved specifically with oral traditions of origin legends, it is worth considering two more of Vansina's statements:

> [Oral traditions] are the representation of the past in the present. One cannot deny either the past or the present in them … Traditions must always be understood as embodying both past and present in a single breath.[15]
>
> … traditions of origin or genesis are what anthropologists term myth. They are accounts that originate out of speculation by local sages about these questions, out of preexisting material of the same nature or borrowed from other communities, and out of heavily fossilized group accounts. (that is, accounts reduced to clichés)[16]

I cite these remarks not to position Vansina as the ultimate authority on the question, but simply to highlight the issues that arise for those of us who—unlike Vansina and others in his discipline—have to face the further filters of the written word and the several centuries between ourselves and the putative

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14 One of the most important and sophisticated recent exponents of this form of analysis is Joaquín Martínez Pizarro; see in particular *A Rhetoric of the Scene: Dramatic Narrative in the Early Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1989), and more recently, "Mixed Modes in Historical Narrative," in *Narrative and History in the Early Medieval West*, ed. Elizabeth M. Tyler and Ross Balzaretti (Turnhout, 2006), pp. 91–104. Further examples are given below in the context of the discussion of the Lombard origin legend.

15 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, p. xii.

16 Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, pp. 22–23.

oral tradition of origin. The present is always embodied in any representation of the past, written or oral; how then can we distinguish between an 'oral' present and a 'written' present in the written material that we have in order to arrive at something that is 'oral tradition' preserved in written form? How can we be sure that it was not our historians who speculated about origins as they wrote their histories? The results of their speculations—the extant written records—could not, in such cases, be understood as representing the oral tradition of their time.

Identifying 'oral tradition' in any medieval text is, one must conclude, not really something that can be done with any level of certainty. To illustrate some of the points made above, I turn now to two examples from the early Middle Ages: the stories of the origins of the Lombards, and narratives of Frankish origins.

2 Example 1: The Origins of the Lombards[17]

Paul the Deacon composed his history of the Lombards in the late 8th century, some 200 years after the Lombard settlement in Italy and the establishment of the Lombard kingdom.[18] Many of Paul's stories about early Lombard history—and especially those concerning Alboin, under whom the Lombards came to Italy and established their rule there—have long been claimed as evidence of a Lombard oral tradition of which Paul's narratives are thought to be written reflexes.[19] In almost every case of a section of Paul's text for which this has been claimed, it is indeed the case that there are either no written sources

17 For a more detailed exposition of the material presented in this section, along with far more copious reference to and discussion of the relevant scholarship, see Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 117–40.

18 The text (hereafter *HL*) is cited from Ludwig Bethmann and Georg Waitz, eds., "Historia Langobardorum," in MGH SRL (Hanover, 1878), pp. 12–187.

19 Thus for example the literary historian Otto Gschwantler, "Die Heldensage von Alboin und Rosimund," in *Festgabe für Otto Höfler zum 75. Geburtstag* (Vienna, 1975), pp. 214–47; idem, "Formen langobardischer mündlicher Überlieferung," *Jahrbuch für internationale Germanistik* 11 (1979), 58–85; and the historians Donald Bullough, "Ethnic History and the Carolingians: An Alternative Reading of Paul the Deacon's *Historia Langobardorum*," in Donald Bullough, *Carolingian Renewal: Sources and Heritage* (Manchester, 1991), pp. 97–122; Hermann Moisl, "Kingship and Orally Transmitted 'Stammestradition' among the Lombards and Franks," in *Die Bayern und ihre Nachbarn, Teil 1*, ed. Herwig Wolfram and Andreas Schwarcz (Vienna, 1985), pp. 111–19; and Walter Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 9–28.

known to us, or that Paul's narrative expands considerably on the extant written source(s); it is also the case that in these narratives he uses what appears to be an elevated style of prose that some scholars see as a sign of an oral source. The origin legend of the Lombards, as narrated by Paul, provides further complications in that there are in fact two earlier written sources with the same story, namely the Frankish text known as the Fredegar chronicle, composed from *c.*660 and preserved in manuscripts from *c.*700 onwards;[20] and the *Origo gentis Langobardorum* (*OGL*), thought to date from the middle of the 7th century, but attested only in manuscripts that are most probably later than the earliest Fredegar manuscript.[21] The *OGL*, 89 lines in Bethmann and Waitz's edition, provides a very concise narrative of Lombard history, from their origins to the reign of Grimuald: roughly the same period that Paul narrates in about 100 pages in the same edition. As is the case with Paul, the bulk of the text is concerned with the earlier part of Lombard history, with only 14 lines dealing with the period after Authari (584–90).

All three sources share a few common elements: the Lombards came from Scandinavia, which is in the north;[22] they were named Lombards because the women used their long hair to pretend to be bearded men and thus scare their enemies; this name is given to them by Wodan (Godan in the *OGL*). There is, however, a progressive expansion in the three accounts, from Fredegar to Paul. Fredegar specifies that Scandinavia is located between the Danube and the ocean; he also tells us that, just before a battle with the Huns, the Lombards are said to have got their name from a voice ascribed by the Lombards to their god Wodan. Immediately after this, the Lombards overpower the Huns and enter Pannonia, and we are told that Narses invited them, under Alboin, into Italy.

The *OGL*'s narrative of Scandinavian origins and the naming of the Lombards differs from Fredegar in a number of respects. Scandinavia is called a northern island; the Lombards are said to have been called "Winniles" before the became Lombards; a Lombard matriarch, Gambara, is named, who ruled with her sons Ybor and Agio. Fredegar places the battle with the Huns after the Lombards' departure from Scandinavia, whereas in the *OGL*, the battle—here against Vandals, not Huns—appears to take place in Scandinavia. Most significantly, the process of the naming of the Lombards is elaborated on quite a bit:

20 Fredegar is cited from Bruno Krusch, ed., "Chronicarum quae dicuntur Fredegarii scholastici," in MGH SRM 2:1–168; the narrative of Lombard origins is at 3.65.

21 The *OGL* is cited from MGH SRL:2–6.

22 On the significance of Scandinavian origins, see the contributions of Kasperski and Rix in this volume, and Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 243–48, 253, et passim.

> Then Ambri and Assi, that is, the leaders of the Vandals, requested Godan that he grant them victory over the Winniles. In response, Godan said: "I will give victory to those whom I see first at sunrise". At the [same] time Gambara and her two sons, that is Ybor and Agio, who were the leaders of the Winniles, requested Frea, the wife of Godan, that she be favourable to the Winniles. Then Frea instructed them that at sunrise the Winniles should come, and their women should loosen their hair around their faces in the manner of a beard and come with their men. In the dawn light as the sun rose, Frea, the wife of Godan, turned the bed on which her husband lay, so that his face was towards the east, and woke him, and he, looking out, saw the Winniles and their women with their loosened hair around their faces, and said: "Who are these long-beards?" And Frea said to Godan: "Just as you have given a name, give them victory as well". And he gave them victory, that they could avenge themselves as they saw fit and achieve victory. From that time the Winniles have been called Langobardi.[23]

It is obvious that while Fredegar knew the basic elements of the tale, he either had no access to the full story, or suppressed it. The further history of the Lombards is greatly truncated in Fredegar: they are in Pannonia, and then in Italy, almost immediately; he tells us in a sentence about Alboin's death, and in a few lines about the death of his wife. The *OGL*, in contrast, takes the Lombards through Anthaib, Bainaib, and Burgundaib—unknown elsewhere except in Paul's account—to Rugiland,[24] before they arrive in Pannonia in chapter five.[25]

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23 "Tunc Ambri et Assi, hoc est duces Wandalorum, rogaverunt Godan, ut daret eis super Winniles victoriam. Respondit Godan dicens: 'Quos sol surgente antea videro, ipsis dabo victoriam.' Eo tempore Gambara cum duobus filiis suis, id est Ybor et Agio, qui principes erant super Winniles, rogaverunt Fream, uxorem Godam, ut ad Winniles esset propitia. Tunc Frea dedit consilium, ut sol surgente venirent Winniles et mulieres eorum crines solutae circa faciem in similitudinem barbae et cum viris suis venirent. Tunc luciscente sol dum surgeret, giravit Frea, uxor Godan, lectum ubi recumbebat vir eius, et fecit faciem eius contra orientem, et excitavit eum. Et ille aspiciens vidit Winniles et mulieres ipsorum habentes crines solutas circa faciem; et ait: 'Qui sunt isti longibarbae?' Et dixit Frea ad Godan: 'Sicut dedisti nomen, da illis et victoriam.' Et dedit eis victoriam, ut ubi visum esset vindicarent se et victoriam haberent. Ab illo tempore Winnilis Langobardi vocati sunt" (*OGL* 1).

24 *OGL* 2–4.

25 *OGL* 5. The narratives concerning Alboin and his death, which have been the object of much attention among scholars seeking Lombard oral tradition, are not discussed here for reasons of space; in any case, given that these take place after the Lombards have arrived in Italy, their final destination, and concern a historical figure, it is debatable whether they should really be counted as part of the origin legend. For discussion, see Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 129–40.

Paul's account is closer to that of the *OGL*, but it is considerably expanded. Paul begins his work with a description of "Germania,"[26] where he locates a number of peoples who eventually conquered much of Europe. Of the Winniles, Paul says that they originated in Scandinavia, which he then goes on to describe, citing Pliny—not any oral tradition—as his authority.[27] His third chapter introduces us very briefly to Ibor and Aio and their mother Gambara, before he digresses again to tell us about the miracle of the Seven Sleepers, whom he locates somewhere in the cold north, and who are, according to him, both Roman and Christian, but venerated by the barbarian nations; about the Scritobini and the length of the day in northern regions; and about Charybdis, before returning to the Winniles.[28] He tells us that they left Scandinavia and came to Scoringia, and it is here that they had to do battle with the Vandals.[29]

Paul's version of the acquisition of the Lombard name is almost identical to that given in the *OGL*; but Paul prefaces the narrative by saying "at this point, the ancient source provides a ridiculous fable."[30] This disdain is repeated at the end of the story: "these things are worthy only of laughter and should be given no credence; for victory is not to be attributed to the power of men, but rather is brought about from heaven."[31] He then tells us that the name is to be attributed not to long-haired women, but to the long beards of the ancient Winniles, and explains that 'lang' means long and 'bart' means beard in their language.[32]

The location of the Lombards in Scandinavia is almost certainly derived from written works, quite possibly from Jordanes, the 6th-century historian of the Goths, though we have no definite way of knowing if the *OGL*-author or Fredegar knew Jordanes, and it is also not clear why Fredegar in particular should have chosen to lift the story of Scandinavian origins from Jordanes and apply it to the Lombards unless he had some independent source to support such an attribution. There are absolutely no extant sources before the *OGL* for the names of Gambara and her sons, nor for the exact story of the naming of the Lombards as provided in these narratives. Wodan's wife is not named in any other written source of this period or before; the name must therefore

26 *HL* 1.1.

27 *HL* 1.1 (origins in Scandinavia); 1.2 (description of Scandinavia).

28 *HL* 1.4 (Seven Sleepers); 1.5 (Scritobini); *HL* 1.6 (Charybdis and Winniles).

29 *HL* 1.7.

30 "Refert hoc loco antiquitas ridiculam fabulam" (*HL* 1.8). "Antiquitas" is an ambiguous word; here it probably refers to the *OGL*, and not to any ancient oral tradition.

31 "Haec risui digna sunt et pro nihil habenda. Victoria enim non potestati est adtributa hominum, sed de caelo potius ministratur" (*HL* 1.8).

32 *HL* 1.9.

come from some oral source.[33] There must therefore have been some sort of knowledge in the first half of the 7th century, most probably orally transmitted, containing a narrative relating to the naming of the Lombards and the names of Gambara, Ibor, and Agio, which also associated them with pagan gods. It is impossible to know how old any such material might have been, but it is entirely possible that it would fit the sorts of definitions of 'oral tradition' discussed above. But there is no need to believe that the story of Scandinavian origins also derived from the same oral sources that provided the story of the naming of the Lombards, and thus there is no real evidence for an oral tradition of migration from Scandinavia.[34] Magali Coumert thus concludes—and I concur—that the *OGL*'s story of Lombard origins is drawn from both oral material that probably provided the names of Gambara and her sons, Wodan and Frea, and the story about how the Lombard name was given; and written sources regarding peoples migrating from the north.[35] Was this conjunction made by the writer of the *OGL*, and was it a specifically *literate* construction? And even if it was, did it have a life orally after the *OGL* was written, or did it remain solely a literate tradition? We cannot know.

Most of Paul's additions to the Lombard origin narrative up to their arrival in Rugiland, at the borders of Rome, can be plausibly traced to written sources.[36] The etymology of the Lombard name itself corresponds both to what we can deduce about Langobardic from our knowledge of other Germanic languages, and to the explanation for the name provided by Isidore of Seville writing in the first third of the 7th century (before the composition of the *OGL*)[37]—though it is perhaps important that Paul appears to present the etymology as if he knows Langobardic, not as something derived from Isidore. With regard to this part of Lombard ancient history, therefore, there is nothing in any of Paul's expansions to the narrative of the *OGL* to suggest that he must have had access to 'oral traditions' in the late 8th century that were independent of the (written) *OGL*; he might well have had access to people speculating in speech about the material contained therein, and perhaps comparing it or otherwise bringing it into dialogue with other materials, written or oral, borrowed from other traditions, and about other peoples.

We cannot be sure how long the Lombards used their native (Germanic) vernacular after having entered Italy; by the time Paul composed the *HL*,

33 Magali Coumert, *Origines des peuples: les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550–850)* (Paris, 2007), pp. 171; 176.

34 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 178–96, esp. pp. 192–93.

35 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 192–96.

36 On the possible written sources, see Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 226–36.

37 Isidore of Seville, *Isidori Hispalensis episcopi Etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), 9.2.95.

there is little evidence for widespread use of any Germanic vernacular, though some level of linguistic knowledge possibly did survive, and it has been suggested that the language might have been more commonly known in the first half of the 8th century, the years of Paul's childhood.[38] It seems nevertheless unlikely that the linguistic survival was vibrant enough to have been sufficient to bear a tradition of Langobardic oral narrative of any sort into the 770s, and indeed, there is no surviving evidence for any oral tradition in a Langobardic vernacular whatsoever. This would suggest that any ancient narratives in Langobardic probably did not survive by the time Paul wrote, and any oral narratives of Paul's day would not have been independent of extant written versions in Latin. (Even if the language did survive, given the extent of Latinity in the Lombard kingdom, it is extremely unlikely that any narratives contained in Langobardic would have been untouched by influence from Latin sources.) The story as presented by Paul would have been known, but the source in his time was probably not any independent (vernacular) oral tradition; there is no good evidence for any oral matter regarding the migration out of Scandinavia in Paul's time,[39] and if there were orally circulating stories, they could easily have derived from the Latin, written *OGL*, and thus perhaps ultimately (with respect to Scandinavian origins) from Jordanes.

Paul does, however, expand on certain elements of early Lombard history with narratives that do not have parallels elsewhere: after telling us how the Lombards receive their name, he has a long narrative of their progress into Italy, in the course of which they encounter Amazons, Bulgarians, Herules, and Gepids.[40] While the Amazons are clearly taken from literary sources, they are associated with a narrative about king Lamissio and his birth that has no precedent.[41] The battle with the Herules is mentioned briefly in the *OGL*,[42] but Paul, unlike the *OGL*, tells us its cause: the Lombard princess Rumetrude sends word to invite a Herule prince for a drink; when she sets eyes on his small stature, she mocks him, and he responds in kind. She dissimulates her fury, invites him to sit, and has him killed, thus instigating war. This story is not

38 On the question of the survival of the Lombard Germanic vernacular, see the discussion in Nicholas Everett, *Literacy in Lombard Italy, c. 568–774* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 100–29. See also, however, Wolfgang Haubrichs, "Langobardic Personal Names: Given Names and Name-Giving among the Lombards," in *The Langobards before the Frankish Conquest: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Giorgio Ausenda, Paolo Delogu, and Chris Wickham (Woodbridge, 2009), pp. 195–236; Haubrichs argues that 8th-century Lombard society was bilingual at least till around the 750s.

39 Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 238–40.

40 *HL* 1.15 (Amazons); *HL* 1.16–17 (Bulgarians); *HL* 1.20 (Herules); *HL* 1.21–4; 27 (Gepids).

41 Lamissio is named at *OGL* 2; but this text gives no further details about him.

42 *OGL* 4.

extant elsewhere. Finally, while the battles with the Gepids are mentioned in the *OGL*, Paul adds a number of details regarding Alboin and Turisind, the Gepid king; in his narratives about Alboin, as in his story on Rumetrude and the Herule prince, Paul lays stress on personal characteristics and their role in political events, and spins out the narrative of Alboin into epic form.

What, then, can we say about the link between oral tradition and origin legends with regard to the Lombards? The reasons for the cautions expressed in the first section of this chapter are, hopefully, manifest with this example: there is every likelihood that there was some sort of oral sources for all three extant written versions of the story, but it is certain that at least some elements, even in what was probably the earliest written version—the *OGL*—were already drawn from written sources. In its fullest form, the narrative provided by Paul the Deacon gives us something that is very much a hybrid of materials likely to have been drawn from both oral and written sources and—an important point—shaped for his own purposes by a very literary writer. We also need to be cautious regarding the nature of any putative oral sources. Paul does not anywhere mention anything that could be called oral tradition in relation to the story of the naming of the Lombards; later, in his narratives about Alboin, he does state that this king's repute spread wide

> to the extent that to this day among both the Bavarians and the Saxons, and even other men of the same tongue, his generosity and glory, and his skill and courage in war, are celebrated in their songs.[43]

This certainly sounds like oral tradition, however one wishes to define it; but whose oral tradition is it? Paul doesn't here refer to a *Lombard* oral tradition: the songs celebrating Alboin are songs of the Bavarians and Saxons and unspecified other peoples of the same tongue. Are the Lombards to be included among the latter group? We cannot know; but if Paul wanted to claim that Lombard songs celebrated a Lombard king, why would he not say so? Moreover, these songs are said to celebrate Alboin's life; Paul does not mention songs in the context of any parts of the origin and migration narrative, nor with regard to Alboin's death—precisely those parts of the narrative that seem to us to have been elaborated on in a way that suggests oral tradition.

Although Paul does not explicitly refer to oral sources used for his history, he nevertheless clearly had access to reasonably detailed stories that must have

43 "ut hactenus etiam tam aput Baioariorum gentem quamque et Saxonum, sed et alios eiusdem linguae homines eius liberalitas et gloria bellorum felicitas et virtus in eorum carminibus celebretur" (*HL* 1.27).

derived from an oral milieu. What is less clear is the nature of such sources, and why he chooses not to mention them. It is worth recalling here that although the story of Wodan and Frea does appear to have been included because Paul felt it was too well known to be left out,[44] it seems to derive directly from a written source alone—and unlike the Alboin narrative, Paul here does not expand, but rather reduces the space given to this story in comparison with the *OGL*. Paul gives us very little that we could use to flesh out any sense of what Lombard oral tradition might have been, and it seems most plausible, on the basis of Paul's reticence, to suggest that his oral sources for the early history of the Lombards were not any sort of formal narrative (epics or lays), but was more likely passed on in some sort of informal prose stories. Whether or not this constitutes 'oral tradition,' and to what extent which parts of his narratives might be termed thus, is a question I leave open here. It is also unlikely that Paul's oral sources were in a Langobardic, Germanic vernacular. It is also worth stressing that Paul crafted his material according to his own purposes: the origin legend is integrated within a larger context, which is unlikely to have been the same that the stories might have had in any putative epic or lay.[45]

All we can know, therefore, about the relationship between oral tradition and the Lombard origin legend in its extant forms is that the latter made some use of some kind of oral tradition in conjunction with a variety of written sources, and it is unlikely ever to be possible either to determine the relationship between the two kinds of sources used, or to determine the nature of the Lombard oral tradition.

3 Example 2: The Trojan Origins of the Franks

Trojan origin myths in the Middle Ages and, specifically, the Trojan origin legend of the Franks, are examined in detail in a number of other contributions to this volume, so the discussion here will be brief, and after a very summary overview of the narrative will focus solely on the problem of oral tradition as it relates to this material.[46] The earliest historian of the Franks, Gregory of Tours, knows nothing of the Trojan origins of the Franks, and indeed has astonishingly

44 This was already suggested by Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (*AD550–800*): *Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988), p. 386; see also Pohl, "Memory, Identity and Power in Lombard Italy," p. 24.

45 Thus already Goffart, *Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 425–28.

46 For the written sources and the debates concerning them, see the contributions of Reimitz and Clarke in this volume, and the most recent detailed analysis of the Trojan origins of the Franks: N. Kıvılcım Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne: The Tradition of Trojan

little to say about their origins beyond the fact that they are said to have come from Pannonia.[47] Although the earliest text to present a Frankish origin legend, the Fredegar chronicle from *c.*660 (which presents two slightly different versions of the story), and the later *Liber historiae Francorum* (*LHF*), composed in the 720s and also containing the Trojan origin legend, both draw on Gregory for a large portion of their narrative to the later 6th century, their concerns and approach to Frankish history is in many ways quite different.[48]

The narrative is quite simple and short (more so than Paul's Lombard origin legend): one branch of Trojans, fleeing Troy after the Trojan war, move through eastern parts of Europe and eventually end up settled along the Rhine; they retain independence from Rome for most of this period, and eventually are able to form their own kingdom under Clovis at the end of the 5th century. Fredegar calls Priam the first king of the Franks, and also states that one group of Franks settled in Macedonia, bringing forth Alexander the Great; he also says they received their name from a later king called Francio. The *LHF* omits these details, but mentions a city the Franks built in Pannonia called Sicambria; its chronology is also much more compressed and vague.

That the Romans had a Trojan origin myth was obviously well known, at least among the Latinate and literate of this period;[49] there are also a number of written sources from the 2nd century B.C.E. onwards relating peoples of Gaul to the Romans; and the derivation of the term 'Frank' from an eponymous king, the term 'Sicamber,' and the migration from Pannonia, are all possibly derived from various written sources.[50] It seems unlikely in the extreme, therefore, that Fredegar and the *LHF* were drawing on an exclusively oral and ancient tradition for their stories of Trojan origins. Nevertheless, not least the

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Origins," *Medieval History Journal* 21 (2019), 251–90. My own more thorough discussion is in Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 99–114.

47 Gregory of Tours, *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis Historiarum libri decem*, ed. and trans. Rudolf Buchner, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1967), 2.9. For a discussion of why Gregory might have decided to suppress narratives of Frankish origins, see the contribution by Reimitz in this volume, and for more detail, Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity, and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge, 2015), particularly chapters 3 and 5.

48 Fredegar, 2.4–6; 3.2; 3.9; "Liber historiae Francorum," ed. Bruno Krusch, in MGH SRM 2:215–328, at 1–15. On the complex relationships between the various early sources for Frankish history, see the works cited at n. 46; the issue is not discussed further in this contribution. The multiple versions of the Frankish origin legend are helpfully tabulated in Coumert, *Origines des peuples*, pp. 318, 331.

49 For an overview of narratives of Troy and Roman Trojan origins in the 7th century, see Coumert, *Origines des peoples*, pp. 268–79.

50 In addition to my discussion and Yavuz's recent paper, both cited above at note 46, both of which provide extensive further references on these issues, see also Reimitz, *History*, pp. 83–87.

existence of different versions of the narrative—including details for which no plausible written source can be found—suggests that both Fredegar and the *LHF* were also drawing on some kind of oral sources, and indeed even their putative written sources were probably based not just on the *topoi* of Roman origins derived from texts, but also possibly some kind of oral material (including, perhaps, *oral* narratives of *Roman* Trojan origins).[51] The link between 'oral tradition' and 'origin legend' here becomes increasingly difficult to pin down to any sort of clear formula. The Franks are likely to have heard stories—oral narratives of some sort—among the Roman military units alongside whom they fought concerning Roman origins; educated Franks are likely to have read such narratives; and along the way stories or speculations of some sort concerning Frankish origins in Troy are likely to have come into being, which in turn would have influenced other texts. Fredegar and the *LHF* were thus most likely drawing on a combination of written and oral sources—as indeed was Paul the Deacon with regard to the Lombards—and it seems unhelpful to try and distinguish clearly between 'oral tradition' on the one hand and a literate, Latin education on the other.[52] Perhaps even more than the Lombard origin legend, therefore, that of the Franks illustrates the difficulties involved in trying to identify oral tradition of any kind as the background to early medieval origin legends.

51 Yavuz, "From Caesar to Charlemagne," p. 255, misrepresents my position somewhat (possibly based on a confusion resulting from my distinction between 'oral tradition' and 'oral sources'); while I did indeed earlier argue that there is no evidence for an ancient oral tradition of Trojan origins among the Franks (*Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 106, 108), I also stated clearly that the "written sources were themselves partly based on oral speculation or reports of some sort, and in turn influenced such informal oral material" and that "the myth of Trojan origins … circulated not just in the various written versions that are extant, but also in some oral form" (*Writing the Barbarian Past*, p. 109). I did not, however, consider in that publication the possibility of oral narratives of Roman Trojan origins having had any influence on the rise of the Frankish origin legend, which I now see as a distinct possibility: the Roman influence is likely to have been both oral and literate.

52 It is worth stressing here that the Franks had been federates or allies of the Romans from the 4th century and reached prominent military positions, the rank of consul, and in one case Augustus, and intermarried with Romans (see Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 12–14, 93–94); the opportunities for learning about Roman Trojan origins were thus varied and multiple, and began quite early. It remains puzzling, however, that Gregory of Tours makes no mention of the Franks' Trojan origin, which might suggest that in his day this legend had perhaps not yet established itself as any sort of 'tradition' in the sense of something more or less widely believed; for this reason I hold to my position that it seems unlikely that there had been an oral tradition passed on over generations and widely accepted at the time Gregory was writing; cf. however the work of Reimitz cited above at note 47.

4 Conclusions

Given that most people in the early Middle Ages, including those of high social status, were illiterate, and given that most cultures which anthropologists have studied over the past century that are primarily non-literate cultivate some kind of oral tradition (whether by means of formal, formulaic poetry, or more informal narratives of various kinds, or both), it seems certain that oral narratives about the past, including about the origins of peoples, were cultivated in Europe within this period as well. In other words, oral traditions existed in the Middle Ages. Oral traditions containing origin legends would certainly have been cultivated in the vernacular. We cannot access these oral traditions; we have only written, and primarily Latin sources that might provide some sort of reflex of vernacular oral traditions. There is also a possibility of narratives of origin circulating orally, however much modified, in Latin as well; these too we cannot access, and there is no particular reason to assume that the Latin texts were always necessarily closer to Latin oral narratives than vernacular ones. This is an issue that would have to be examined anew for each case, and it is unlikely that we could ever reach much certainty about it.

The problem of language is one I have largely skated over, but we cannot and should not assume that the transfer from one language to another, like the transfer from one medium to another, occurred with no transformation of content, form, structure, and style. In fact, it is almost certainly the case that such transformations always occurred. The ways in which oral traditions were received, evaluated, modified, and passed on among the Latinate who knew Latin texts with other origin legends and were familiar with the *topoi* and structures of Latin narratives might well have differed from the ways in which the non-Latinate and non-literate engaged with these legends. Yet it is impossible to know *how* such differences manifested themselves, and what the transformations were that occurred. As a result, trying to identify oral tradition on the basis of narratives of the past and attempting to study the 'oral culture' of early medieval peoples is not an exercise that is likely to be very profitable in terms of enriching the empirical basis for understanding early medieval historical consciousness.[53] Asking questions can in itself be fruitful as a means of thinking afresh about a culture, however; and doing so can force us to acknowledge our ignorance. This is of fundamental importance: because of the nature of our source base, we are always likely to privilege the written over the oral, and Latin over the vernacular; but devising theories regarding

53 For a forcefully expressed alternative view, see Michael Richter, *The Formation of the Medieval West: The Oral Culture of the Barbarians* (Dublin, 1994).

medieval culture on such a basis without acknowledging the importance of oral traditions—including precisely the fact that we cannot access the latter or indeed know much about them—results in as misleading a conception of early medieval culture as an approach that attempts to recreate the oral culture of the period from the written sources.[54]

We should, however, also always recall that there was no vast gulf separating an oral, vernacular, secular culture from a literate, Latinate, clerical one. All those partaking in the latter would also not only have had access to, but would indeed have quite literally grown up in some form of the former as well. Clerics participated in secular life and had all manner of interactions with persons who had no Latin; and the elites of the latter class of people were almost invariably related by ties of blood, marriage, and patronage, to the Latinate and literate. The boundaries between one sphere and the other were so permeable that it is unwise to seek to distinguish sharply between 'oral tradition and origin legends' and 'literate culture and origin legends.'[55]

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54 See for example Rosamond McKitterick, *The Carolingians and the Written Word* (Cambridge, 1989); and the important rejoinder in Ernst Hellgardt, "Zur Mehrsprachigkeit im Karolingerreich: Bemerkungen aus Anlaß von Rosamond McKittericks Buch *The Carolingians and the Written Word*," *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur* 118 (1996), 1–48.

55 Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 264–66, et passim.

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CHAPTER 13

Origin Legends and Objects

Katherine Cross

Origin legends, by definition, relate to the material and social worlds. They cannot be defined as a literary genre, though they accrued narrative conventions and repeated *topoi* during the early Middle Ages. Instead, these narratives appear within a variety of historical genres, while a broader range of texts, including vernacular poetry and genealogies, seems to refer to them.[1] Nor can the category of origin legends be drawn according to their content, since this tends merely to reinforce modern preconceptions, whether that means separating history from fantasy or 'Germanic' tradition from classical ethnographic references.[2] The uniting factor seems to be the social and narrative role played by these stories. Either within the overarching narrative of a text, or within society more broadly, origin legends explain how a contemporary group, political order, or institution came into being. They both claim a reflection of material historical realities and play a role in cohering and expressing an ethnic or national (or regional, institutional, or political) identity in the world outside the text.

As a result, investigation into origin legends has always incorporated materials beyond the literary text, in attempts to corroborate (or refute) those historical statements or to find further evidence of the identities in question. The key cross-medium exchanges debated have been the relationships of oral traditions to the written text (as discussed by Shami Ghosh in this volume). Yet the transmission, circulation, and employment of narratives in society also incorporated material culture, art and architecture, topography and place, and ritual performance. If we want to understand how origin legends operated in society, and how they related to people's identities, we must engage with these multiple and intersecting channels of communication. In this chapter, I consider how early medievalists from a range of disciplinary backgrounds have combined texts and material culture in their study of origin legends, before

1 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (*A.D. 550–800*) (Princeton, 1988); Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, "Ethnic and National History ca. 500–1000," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah M. Deliyannis (Leiden, 2003), pp. 43–87 (esp. pp. 43, 47, 81).

2 Pizarro, "Ethnic and National History," pp. 44–47; Susan Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm," *History* 68 (1983), 375–90.

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looking at two case studies in detail. In particular, this chapter focuses on portable objects, since they have been used to demonstrate both personal identity and migrations in varied ways.

The following discussion addresses the role of origin legends in early medieval England in the Anglo-Saxon and Viking periods. Accounts of the so-called *adventus Saxonum* recorded in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (731) and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (earliest existing version *c*.891/92), have been discussed extensively as origin legends for the English-speaking peoples, and further contributions in this volume demonstrate the continued appropriateness of the label.[3] However, we may also consider the lack of comparable origin legends from Viking Age England, despite a possibly similar process of migration, conquest, and settlement by ethnically distinct groups.[4] Judith Jesch's chapter in this volume reveals the richness of origin legends composed in and about the Viking Age in other regions of northern Europe. I suggest that we need to broaden the scope of what we consider to be origin legends, and to search for their equivalents, if we are to understand how they arise (or when they do not). To find them, we may need to look beyond texts.

1 Approaches to Origin Legends and Objects

Narratives we now classify as origin legends have always formed part of the study of early medieval material culture. As scholarly approaches to these narratives have changed, so have their roles within discussions of archaeological and art-historical evidence. Broadly speaking, there has been a move outwards from imagining material culture as part of the historical *content* of origin legends, to interpreting it as making similar *claims* and playing a similar role as those legends, to considering objects as *media* involved in storytelling processes in distinct and complementary ways to texts. We can see these three approaches as progressively distancing material culture from origin myths' internal narrative worlds, but they are all current perspectives, and indeed there is considerable overlap between them. While the following discussion focuses on material from Britain, the methodological developments have

3 Barbara Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends," in *Myth, Rulership, Church and Charters: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Brooks*, ed. Julia Barrow and Andrew Wareham (Aldershot, 2008), pp. 15–29; Nicholas Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven, 1989).

4 Katherine Cross, *Heirs of the Vikings: History and Identity in Normandy and England, c. 950–c. 1015* (York, 2018), pp. 80–83.

taken place in a much broader context that encompasses research into early medieval Europe more generally.

The majority of studies considering origin legends in relation to material culture have aimed at assessing the historicity of those narratives. From the mid-19th century, archaeologists and antiquarians used origin legends as a means of identifying excavated artefacts from the early medieval period. In England, Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, along with the *Historia Brittonum* (mid-9th century), supplied a chronology of migration and conquest by Germanic tribes from the Continent in the 5th and 6th centuries C.E., which seemed to provide an explanation for the artefacts being unearthed by the barrow-diggers. Antiquarians viewed excavated grave goods as the cultural footprints of distinct peoples found in these historical texts. For the English antiquarian Thomas Wright, for instance, the regional distribution of different brooch types found in furnished burials constituted the primary material for identifying Anglian, Saxon, and Jutish peoples in the archaeological record while, for J.M. Kemble, comparison of cremation urns from England and in Hanover seemed to supply evidence for migration from Saxony as described by Bede.[5] The approach to the material relied upon the idea that tribal groups used distinct *types* of objects and decorated them with their own forms of ornament; the geographical and chronological distinctions between these types and styles then revealed the movements of peoples.

As the discipline of early medieval archaeology found its feet, scholars rapidly appreciated that archaeological findings could challenge the narratives they were using as guides. E.T. Leeds, identifying 'early Saxon' artefact types in the Upper Thames valley, reconstructed a different route of migration for the early West Saxons from that found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[6] Moreover, with the multiplication of artefactual and archaeological evidence, it became clear that Bede's account of Anglian, Saxon, and Jutish migration required revision. Mid-20th-century archaeologists such as J.N.L. Myres argued for a more complex map of migrant Germanic-speaking ethnicities in 5th- and 6th-century lowland Britain, and identified the survival of a native British population through the

5 Thomas Wright, *The Celt, The Roman, and the Saxon* (London, 1852), p. 410; J.M. Kemble, "On Mortuary Urns Found at Stade-on-the-Elbe and Other Parts of North Germany, Now in the Museum of the Historical Society of Hanover," *Archaeologia* 36 (1856), 270–83, repr. in Kemble, *Horae Ferales, or Studies in the Archaeology of the Northern Nations* (London, 1863), pp. 221–32; Sam Lucy, *The Anglo-Saxon Way of Death: Burial Rites in Early England* (Stroud, 2000), p. 11.

6 E.T. Leeds, *The Archaeology of the Anglo-Saxon Settlements* (Oxford, 1913), pp. 50–53.

appearance of 'Romano-British' artistic elements on some artefacts.[7] The first century of academic study into early medieval material culture led to a more nuanced approach to origin legends in historical texts, which were shown to be unreliable accounts of the post-Roman centuries.

Origin legends were thus treated as comparable to other kinds of historical sources. They were assessed for reliability and for the authenticity of the traditions they recorded. The considerable length of time that had passed between the events they described and their recording in writing suggested a high degree of distortion, of course. But historical critique in the 1970s and 1980s indicated that the issue was more significant than distortion: the accounts of the *adventus Saxonum* are better understood as a different kind of narrative, as origin legends akin to those told about other early medieval peoples.[8] However, a number of important archaeological studies have continued to use these sources primarily as (admittedly unreliable) historical records of migration and ethnic groupings, providing a chronological frame.[9] Compare the treatment of Viking Age migration to England. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* again supplies a framework for investigation, but in this instance the historical text is near contemporary and compiled from an outsider perspective. Material culture—the presence of women's oval brooches, the incidence of furnished burial, and the cremation rite—is similarly used to map the migration and impact of Scandinavian settlers, fleshing out the sparse details of the *Chronicle*.[10] Yet it is not at all clear that the annals recording the arrivals of Hengest and Horsa, Cerdic and Cynric, Stuf and Wihtgar, and so on, can be used as historical sources akin to the annals recorded by contemporaries in the 9th century.

Research into the material culture of the post-Roman centuries has now begun to employ origin legends, not for the historical information they contain, but as a distinct form of narrative. In particular, scholars have been influenced by the 'ethnogenesis' theory of the Vienna school and associated

7 J.N.L. Myres, "Three Styles of Decoration on Anglo-Saxon Pottery," *Antiquity* 17 (1937), 424–37; J.N.L. Myres, *Anglo-Saxon Pottery and the Settlement of England* (Oxford, 1969); Lucy, *Anglo-Saxon Way of Death*, pp. 164–73.

8 Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends"; Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Settlement of England in Bede and the *Chronicle*," *Anglo-Saxon England* 12 (1983), 1–41.

9 E.g. John Hines, *The Scandinavian Character of Anglian England in the Pre-Viking Period*, British Archaeological Reports, British Series 124 (Oxford, 1984); Toby F. Martin, *The Cruciform Brooch and Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2014).

10 Jane Kershaw, *Viking Identities: Scandinavian Jewellery in England* (Oxford, 2013); Guy Halsall, "The Viking Presence in England? The Burial Evidence Reconsidered," in *Cultures in Contact: Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*, ed. Dawn Hadley and Julian Richards (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 259–75 for critique of such approaches to burial evidence.

discussions of the literary and linguistic evidence for origin legends.[11] Proponents of the 'ethnogenesis' theory identified an oral narrative 'core of tradition' preserved by a small elite group, and possibly reflecting their historic past experiences, which was then adopted much more widely to form the basis of an ethnic identity.[12] Archaeologists have similarly proposed that material culture could reflect past migrations and lifestyle traditions of elites, which their followers came to adopt as their own.[13] The interpretation of material culture in such work, however, follows the same logic in identifying 'foreign' influence as the product of a past, ethnicity-defining, migration. This mode of interpretation still aims to identify the core of historical truth behind the origin legends through archaeological evidence.

An 'ethnogenesis'-based approach begins to address, but does not fully overcome, a central problem in using material culture to investigate migration: object types and artistic styles do not reflect ethnicity in a straightforward way.[14] Many interpretations interested in historicity rely on the idea that the people who wore (or were buried with) Scandinavian-made and Scandinavian-style brooches had their origins in Scandinavia, too. The 'ethnogenesis'-type arguments respond to the complexity and fluidity of early medieval ethnic identity by reinterpreting foreign artefacts as *assertions* of a migrant identity that could be adopted by people of diverse backgrounds. However, they still rest on the principle that the primary meaning of such artefacts must have been ethnic: that a Scandinavian-type brooch signalled that its owner identified as Scandinavian. Susan Oosthuizen recently illustrated the fallacy of using 'foreign' artefacts as an index of migrant ethnicities by providing a similar distribution map of IKEA stores in England in 2018, pointing out that this does not provide evidence of Swedish colonization, or hold any relationship to Swedish

11 These scholars drew on the ideas of Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (Cologne, 2nd ed. 1977); see especially Herwig Wolfram, "*Origo et religio*: Ethnic Traditions and Literature in Early Medieval Texts," *Early Medieval Europe* 3 (1994), 19–38; Andrew Gillett, ed. *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2002) gives a sense of the debate.

12 See critique of this model in Guy Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations and the Roman West, 376–568* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 457–62.

13 Howard Williams noted the 'parity' in approach: *Death and Memory in Early Medieval Britain* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 40. Archaeological applications of *Traditionskern* ethnogenesis theory can be quite flexible: Martin, *Cruciform Brooch*, pp. 181–82.

14 For a full discussion of the methodological and philosophical problems encountered when using early medieval archaeology to discuss ethnicity, see D.J.M. Harland, "Deconstructing Anglo-Saxon Archaeology" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2017). This thesis gives a fuller critical discussion of many of the studies mentioned in the next few paragraphs . See now Harland's monograph, *Ethnic Identity and the Archaeology of the* Aduentus Saxonum: *a Modern Framework and its Problems* (Amsterdam, 2021).

ethnicity in Britain.[15] By analogy, there are multiple possible explanations for the presence of Scandinavian brooches in Britain (and this is true also for the Viking Age context). Moreover, there are multiple possible meanings that may have been attributed to them by wearers and viewers, and different individuals may have ascribed different meanings to the same objects—context is key to their interpretation. None of these objections amount to a complete rejection of the possibility that objects could reflect migration or convey ethnic identity, simply that the connection is not automatic and must be investigated.

Objects, then, convey meanings, and participate in the construction of identity, rather than merely reflecting it. Under the influence of post-processual archaeology, early medievalists since the 1980s have become less ready to label particular object types as the products of defined historical cultures, and have given more thought to how material culture and burial practices acted as symbols and expressions of ideology.[16] We as scholars should try to 'read' the messages presented in the material evidence rather than treat it as empirical data. Objects are thus akin to literary texts, making similar claims and open to similar interpretations.[17]

With this shift in methodological perspective, archaeologists and art historians have employed origin legends in a different way. They are now recognized as narratives circulating in society and as products of the same ideologies as material culture. Several influential interpretations of archaeological evidence have suggested that early medieval material culture and mortuary ritual conveyed ideological messages and constructed identities through allusion to just such origin legends. Most commonly, the presence of supposedly 'Germanic' cultural markers is interpreted as evidence of an assertion of migration across the North Sea, whether or not such a migration actually took place.[18] In an alternative form of explanation, Andres Dobat has proposed that a 'stranger-king' origin myth, rather than a more generalized migration, lies behind the

15 Susan Oosthuizen, *The Emergence of the English* (Leeds, 2019), pp. 59–67 (p. 63 for the map).

16 On post-processual archaeology, see Guy Halsall, "Archaeology and Historiography," repr. in Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society in Merovingian Gaul: Selected Studies in History and Archaeology, 1992–2009* (Leiden, 2010), pp. 19–48 (pp. 32–38).

17 E.g. Martin Carver, "Burial as Poetry: The Context of Treasure in Anglo-Saxon Graves," in *Treasure in the Medieval West*, ed. E. Tyler (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 25–48.

18 E.g. Tania Dickinson, "Review Article: What's New in Early Medieval Burial Archaeology?," *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), 71–87 (pp. 84–85); James Gerrard, *The Ruin of Roman Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 181, 271; see critique in Harland, "Deconstructing Anglo-Saxon Archaeology," pp. 156–61.

foreign objects in Scandinavian ship burials (and, by analogy, at Sutton Hoo).[19] A detailed argument linking objects and rituals to origin legends was made by Heinrich Härke who, in an essay entitled "Material Culture as Myth," proposed that the rite of weapon burial in the 5th and 6th centuries conveyed a 'conquest myth' that would later be committed to writing in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. Härke made the argument for comparability explicitly:

> If material culture can be analysed and discussed as text, the closest material-cultural analogy of the conquest myth must be the Anglo-Saxon weapon-burial rite. Weapons are displayed and buried in the graves of families who consider themselves to be the descendants of the invaders referred to in the written sources. The weapons symbolize the violence of the conquest which is described in such gory detail in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.[20]

A major contribution of these studies is that they have emphasized the ritual performances by which objects came to be placed within graves, and the symbolism of the burial assemblage as a whole and in relation to others. Similar arguments have been developed to explain styles and iconography: the popularity of animal art (especially Salin's Styles I and II) in the 5th to 7th centuries has also been explained as an assertion of masculine, royal, and ethnic identities linked to divine ancestors and Scandinavian myths of origins.[21] This art-historical perspective facilitates the interpretation also of decontextualized objects, and engages primarily with their creation rather than their deposition.

In forming these interpretations, scholars may refer to origin legends known from later texts, and suggest that they circulated in some form in earlier centuries (as Härke), or they may posit the existence of origin legends based purely on the material evidence (as Dobat)—although, since they are developed by anthropological and historical analogy, these end up looking rather similar.

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19 Andres Siegfried Dobat, "Viking Stranger-Kings: The Foreign as a Source of Power in Viking Age Scandinavia, or, Why There Was a Peacock in the Gokstad Ship Burial," *Early Medieval Europe* 23 (2015), 161–201.

20 Heinrich Härke, "Material Culture as Myth: Weapons in Anglo-Saxon Graves," in *Burial and Society: The Chronological and Social Analysis of Archaeological Burial Data*, ed. C.K. Jensen and K. Høilund Nielsen (Aarhus, 1997), pp. 119–27 (p. 123).

21 Tania Dickinson, "Symbols of Protection: The Significance of Animal-Ornamented Shields in Early Anglo-Saxon England," *Medieval Archaeology* 49 (2005), 109–63; Karen Høilund-Nielsen, "Animal Art and the Weapon Burial Rite—A Political Badge?," in *Burial and Society: The Chronological and Social Analysis of Archaeological Burial Data*, ed. Claus Kjeld Jensen and Karen Høilund-Nielsen (Aarhus, 1997), pp. 129–48.

Both of these approaches hold their problems. The origin legends contained in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and genealogical lists should be interpreted as creative products of their moments of composition, politicized accounts of contemporary ethnic relations in the 8th and 9th centuries. If we are to relate these legends to identities of earlier centuries, we must believe that they held true to a long-lived narrative core. These are matters of considerable debate and continuing disagreement.[22] Moreover, relying too heavily on a narrative known from texts in order to unlock the meaning of an artefact or an assemblage relegates the material object to always playing a secondary role. The origin legend must exist independently, known from its textual representations and assumed oral tradition, and it must also exist prior to the object invoking it. This perspective leaves no space for the material allusion to the origin legend to influence the narrative or its future employment. However, if we focus entirely on the material, then the narratives remain unknown to us and we can only talk in broad categories such as 'ancestors' and 'migration.' The role of material culture in narrative transmission is again lost, or arguments become highly speculative.

In order to continue, we require a deeper understanding of the precise mechanisms by which objects communicated origin legends. How could material artefacts work as a means of narrative transmission, and how did their roles relate to texts (including oral texts)? Interest in such questions draws on recent discussions among scholars in the humanities about the active role of objects in historical processes. This 'material turn' has stimulated a range of ways of thinking about how material things act with humans and sometimes independently of them, emphasizing object-centred approaches. We can move beyond the textual analogy to consider how material culture may convey meaning in a distinct way to texts.[23] The archaeologist Howard Williams, shifting from Härke's emphasis on myth to see "Material Culture as Memory," has explored how early medieval objects and funerary ritual operated as 'technologies of remembrance.'[24] In addition to functioning as symbols, objects may

22 In assessing the likelihood of earlier versions, the evidence of a particular passage of Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* is also crucial: see Yorke, "Anglo-Saxon Origin Legends," p. 36.

23 For important reflections on the limitations in seeing furnished inhumations as 'texts' to be 'read,' see Guy Halsall, "Burial Writes: Graves, 'Texts' and Time in Early Merovingian Northern Gaul," in *Erinnerungskultur im Bestattungsritual*, ed. J. Jarnut and M. Wemhoff, Archäologisch-Historisches Forum (Munich, 2003), pp. 61–74 (repr. in Halsall, *Cemeteries and Society*, pp. 215–31).

24 Howard Williams, "Material Culture as Memory: Combs and Cremation in Early Medieval Britain," *Early Medieval Europe* 12 (2003), 89–128 (p. 90): "material culture can be identified as a medium (parallel to, and interacting with, words and texts) through which social

communicate memories and identities through their transformation in the ritual process and "through metaphorical associations based on their provenance and materiality," including their connections to "famed social actors."[25] Early medieval texts have also begun to provide insights into how objects conveyed narratives. Elisabeth van Houts has demonstrated how documents from the later Anglo-Saxon period and across the Norman Conquest show objects acting as "pegs for memory," associated with particular individuals and prompting the telling of stories.[26]

When material things tell stories, they do it differently from texts. The concept of object biography, in its varied applications, ascribes a narrative role to unique artefacts.[27] We cannot interpret all 'weapon burials' in the same way: the particular sword interred mattered. Nor do object biographies begin and end with the grave. Sue Brunning has presented swords in Anglo-Saxon England and Viking Age Scandinavia—not only in the context of furnished burials—as 'living' artefacts which, as individual objects, accumulated meaning through consecutive ownerships, customization, reputation, and multiple functions.[28] This argument demonstrates the need to analyse specific, individual objects in order to appreciate their significance to those who used them. Instead of beginning with typology, we may take individual objects as the starting point and consider how they transmitted, rather than merely reflected, origin legends.

To investigate this relationship between object and origin myth, we are on firmer ground if we turn first to narratives for which we have contemporaneous and/or clearly connected material and textual evidence. This necessity, and the biographical approach to objects, requires a longer chronological perspective, moving beyond the post-Roman centuries into the middle and later Anglo-Saxon periods and beyond. The rest of this chapter explores the possibilities of this approach through two examples. First, we look at the iconography of the Romulus and Remus legend in the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms.

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memories might be transmitted and reproduced in the early Middle Ages"; p. 93 for "technologies of remembrance."

25 Williams, "Material Culture as Memory," p. 117; Williams, *Death and Social Memory*, p. 40.

26 Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe, 900–1200* (Basingstoke, 1999), pp. 93–120.

27 For critical discussion of the concept, see Roberta Gilchrist, "The Materiality of Medieval Heirlooms: From Biographical to Sacred Objects," in *Mobility, Meaning and Transformations of Things: Shifting Contexts of Material Culture through Time and Space*, ed. Hans Peter Hahn and Hadas Weiss (Oxford, 2013), pp. 170–82.

28 Sue Brunning, *The Sword in Early Medieval Northern Europe: Experience, Identity, Representation* (Woodbridge, 2019).

Portable objects bearing images of the Roman origin myth acted as an alternative means of narrative transmission to texts, with additional layers of meaning. Second, we investigate the Horn of Ulf—an object which embodies a local origin legend. In this case, the object and its visual representations stimulated and conveyed a narrative for centuries before any text recorded it, and subsequent texts were always to some degree responding to the object. These examples allow us to investigate the key questions raised here: how do objects transmit origin legends? And, specifically, what is the role of foreign objects and iconographies—are they markers of migration, or something else? These two case studies indicate the potential roles played by early medieval objects in the formation, transmission, and social significance of origin legends.

2 Romulus and Remus

Narrative images are relatively rare in visual and material culture from the Anglo-Saxon period, and there are no known pre-Conquest images representing the *adventus Saxonum* or foundational ancestors such as Hengest and Horsa. However, one origin legend appears in Anglo-Saxon art with some frequency and from early in the period: that of Romulus and Remus, the legendary founders of Rome. In each case, the twins are represented as infants or children suckling from the she-wolf, as in numerous ancient Roman depictions of the legend. The earliest such image, which appears on the 5th-century Undley Bracteate, almost certainly derived from a Roman coin exemplar, as did many bracteate motifs.[29] Nevertheless, the image is clear, suggesting that the copyist understood what it was intended to represent, even if it is not conclusive evidence of knowledge of the legend itself. After this, we know of a number of depictions produced in 8th-century England: the Series V silver pennies from southern England, perhaps Kent, in the 720s (Figure 13.1); silver coins minted by the moneyer Lul for Kings Æthelberht of East Anglia and Offa of Mercia in the 790s (Figure 13.2);[30] a fragment of a whalebone plaque from Larling, Norfolk, probably from a similar period;[31] and a more detailed narrative

29 BM 1984,1101.1; Sonia Marzinzik, *Masterpieces of Early Medieval Art* (London, 2013), pp. 92–93.

30 *The Making of England: Anglo-Saxon Art and Culture, AD 600–900*, ed. Janet Backhouse and Leslie Webster (London, 1991), no. 222a; Anna Gannon, "Three Coins in a Fountain," in *Roma Felix: Formation and Reflections of Medieval Rome, Church, Faith, and Culture in the Medieval West*, ed. Éamonn Ó Carragáin and Carol Neuman de Vegvar (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 287–306 (pp. 299–302).

31 Norwich Castle Museum 184.970; *Making of England*, no. 139 (p. 179).

FIGURE 13.1 Series V penny, *c.*720s, southern England

FIGURE 13.2 Penny of Æthelberht of East Anglia (d. 794), East Anglia

FIGURE 13.3 The Franks Casket, *c.*700, Mercia or Northumbria, left side

image filling the left panel of the whalebone Franks Casket, carved around 700 in Mercia or Northumbria (Figure 13.3).[32] For visual representations of a clearly identifiable, non-Christian, narrative, this selection is without equal for the early Anglo-Saxon centuries.

The population of early medieval England probably encountered the legend of Romulus and Remus primarily through their iconographic representation. Their appearance on three different issues of coinage meant that images of the wolf and twins passed through the hands of a wide variety of people. Moreover, late Roman coinage bearing the image was familiar enough to have provided the original models.[33] In addition, gems and medallions seem to have

32 BM 1867,0120.1; Leslie Webster, *The Franks Casket* (London, 2012).

33 Carol Neuman de Vegvar, "The Travelling Twins: Romulus and Remus in Anglo-Saxon England," in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. Jane Hawkes and Susan Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 256–67 (pp. 259–60, and figs 21.6 and 21.7 on p. 262): Neuman de Vegvar identified the URBS ROMA type coinage of Constantine I, examples of which have been found in Anglo-Saxon graves, as the source of motifs on the Undley Bracteate. Coins with variations on the iconography still circulated as prestige items in later centuries—she provides an early 4th-century bronze example from Ostia as possible model for the Franks Casket's Romulus and Remus panel.

inspired the designer of the Series V coinage.[34] The variety of images produced in the 8th century, in different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and in both coin and whalebone, suggests multiple sources of inspiration from various late Roman models. Iconography thus constituted a major mode of transmission for the origin legend, largely independent of written versions.

Various texts including the story of Romulus and Remus, or some reference to it, did circulate in 8th-century England. The most likely form in which the origin legend may have been encountered is in Virgil's *Aeneid* although, as a pagan work of Latin verse, this text was probably only accessible to the most learned. Orosius's *Seven Books of History against the Pagans*, and its 9th-century Old English translation, refer briefly to Rome's founders, and further reference is made to the story in Augustine's *City of God* and other early Christian discussions of Rome. However, none of these texts gives the she-wolf foundation story particular prominence. It may be that, as Nicholas Howe suggested, as a "canonical" myth the story had "general currency in the literary as well as the popular imagination": if so, the narrative must have circulated by other means.[35] The images, therefore, provide us with evidence for the narrative's transmission and its importance in this local context that texts do not.

Some of the images do suggest a degree of intersection between visual and textual traditions. The Franks Casket panel is framed by an inscription captioning it "Romulus and Remus, the two brothers. A she-wolf nurtured them in the city of Rome, far from their/our native land."[36] This panel largely follows the iconographic type of Romulus and Remus's discovery by the shepherds, but it also supplies additional details not found in any other images.[37] Some of these, such as the wolf licking one child's foot, recall literary versions of the legend: the *Aeneid* describes the she-wolf licking the boys into shape with her tongue.[38] Yet, on the Franks Casket, the tongue belongs to a second wolf, entirely unattested in textual or visual representations. It is either the designer's own innovation, or perhaps refers to an unknown oral version of the legend.[39] Other images also show innovation. The Series V coinage displays an image quite

34 Gannon, "Three Coins," pp. 293–99. Neuman de Vegvar, "Travelling Twins," p. 260, provides the example of a Roman gem used in a 7th-century Merovingian ring.

35 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, p. 62.

36 Webster, *Franks Casket*, p. 23; P.W. Souers, "The Franks Casket: Left Side," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 18 (1935), 199–209 (p. 208).

37 Neuman de Vegvar, "Travelling Twins," pp. 256–57.

38 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.633–34; on this tradition, see Cristina Mazzoni, *She-Wolf: The Story of a Roman Icon* (New York, 2010), pp. 101–08.

39 Michael Hunter, "Germanic and Roman Antiquity and the Sense of the Past in Anglo-Saxon England," *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1974), 29–50 (p. 40).

different to that of Roman precursors, emphasizing different details, such as the droplets of milk falling from the wolf's teats.[40] Literary evidence for the Roman foundation myth is therefore of limited use in explaining the significance of these objects and the specific meanings of the images they bear.

However, we may contextualize them among further representations of Romulus and Remus from across early medieval Europe. For centuries, the image of the wolf suckling twins had condensed the origin legend into a defined, reproducible image, particularly on coinage, which symbolized Rome. Rulers in the 'barbarian' kingdoms continued to utilize this powerful symbol. Ostrogothic kings in the late 5th and early 6th centuries had used exactly the same Constantinian issue as did Offa and Æthelberht, as a model for their own bronze *nummi*, with the text INVICTA ROMA.[41] The iconography, here, clearly acted as a symbol for the city of Rome, equivalent to the contemporary FELIX RAVENNA issues. In reviving this centuries-old design, the Ostrogothic rulers invoked the authority of the city of Rome, rather than their own or the eastern emperor's names (as on their silver and gold coinage). As Alessia Rovelli has pointed out, it was through these bronze coins that royal imagery reached the greatest number of people.[42] The cities of Rome and Ravenna were under Ostrogothic control and provided unifying focuses for their mixed subject populations of Goths and Romans; relying on the cities as authorizing symbols for coinage was perhaps the most widely acceptable strategy. Charlemagne also appropriated the image, placing a bronze statue of the 'she-wolf' in his palace at Aachen, in echo of the Capitoline wolf standing outside the Lateran palace in Rome.[43] Of course, Æthelberht, Offa, and the minters of the Series V coinage did not mint their coins in Rome, nor did they lay claim to the imperial title. Yet we should probably view their coins as a similar endeavour, as part of the broader history of post-Roman kings accruing Roman imagery to themselves as a means of legitimizing and aggrandizing their rule, albeit with particular inflexions in each local context.

Art-historical analysis of the images themselves, and the objects they appear on, suggests that images of the suckling she-wolf and twins had acquired a religious meaning, too. Most clearly, on the Larling Plaque, the wolf and twins

40 Gannon, "Three Coins in a Fountain," p. 294.

41 Elena Baldi. 2014. *Ostrogothic Coinage in the British Museum: online catalogue*. Available at https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/online_research_catalogues/ocg/ostrogothic_coinage.aspx. Accessed 29 August 2019.

42 Alessia Rovelli, "From the Fall of Rome to Charlemagne (c. 400–800)," in *Money and Coinage in the Middle Ages*, ed. Rory Naismith, Reading Medieval Sources 1 (Leiden, 2019), pp. 63–92 (p. 72).

43 Mazzoni, *She-Wolf*, p. 43.

shelter under the arm of the cross. Leslie Webster has suggested that, in 8th-century England, the image was understood as the Roman church in a specifically nurturing sense, with the suckling wolf representing the church as a nursing mother;[44] such a meaning would explain the emphasis on the milk and the action of suckling in the Anglo-Saxon representations.[45] Again, a broader set of early medieval images reinforces a Christian reading. Within the British Isles, both the Donaghmore Cross (County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, 9th/10th century) and Maen Achwyfan (Flintshire, Wales, 10th century) possibly depict the scene at the base of their cross-shafts.[46] A more certain parallel is found on the Rambona diptych, an ivory carving of around 900 from a Lombard abbey in central Italy, which presents with an identifying inscription Romulus and Remus suckling from their adoptive wolf-mother at the foot of a crucifixion; the wolf's back appears to support the twin mountains of Golgotha.[47] In each case, the image may be seen as supporting, but subordinate to, the cross. The association with Christianity was made, not by chronological narrative, but by spatial relationship. Moreover, the formal content of the iconography, as an image of nurture, may have facilitated the development of a new meaning. Augustine of Hippo had Christianized the Roman origin legend through rationalization of God's plan for the Roman Empire—the image could adapt to a Christian meaning through metaphor instead.[48]

Some scholars have turned to vernacular texts and cultural traditions to provide an explanation of how the images may have been read in a specifically Anglo-Saxon context. For instance, Sonia Marzinzik read the Undley Bracteate as a transformation of Roman imagery into a representation of Woden, with the wolf as his attribute.[49] Such ideas have gained support from the prevalence and significance of wolves in Old English and associated literatures. Similarly, Rovelli, discussing the Ostrogothic kings' use of Romulus and Remus on their coinage, has even suggested that interpretation of the image may have divided on ethnic lines: while the Roman population likely recognized the Romulus

44 Leslie Webster, "The Iconographic Programme of the Franks Casket," in *Northumbria's Golden Age*, ed. J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), pp. 227–47 (p. 241).

45 Anna Gannon, *The Iconography of Early Anglo-Saxon Coinage: Sixth to Eighth Centuries* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 119–21.

46 Hilary Richardson and John Scarry, *An Introduction to Irish High Crosses* (Cork, 1990), pl. 76; Howard Williams. Memory, Movement and the Early Medieval Cross: Maen Achwyfan, *Archaeodeath* blog. Published online: 8 October 2017. Available at https://howardwilliamsblog.wordpress.com/2017/10/08/memory-movement-and-the-early-medieval-cross-maen-achwyfan/. Accessed 23 July 2019.

47 Mazzoni, *She-Wolf*, pp. 193–97.

48 Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei libri XXII*, 18.21.

49 Marzinzik, *Masterpieces*, p. 92.

and Remus narrative, the wolf may have evoked different connotations in "the Germanic imaginary."[50] Carol Neuman de Vegvar, in her analysis of the Franks Casket image of Romulus and Remus, noted the similarity of the story with numerous tales in 'Indo-European' folklore; she emphasized the association of wolves and warriors, the two brothers as 'dioscuri,' and the apparent hierarchy displayed in order to suggest that the image "found sympathetic echoes in indigenous culture, and its meaning was likely enhanced by comparisons that such similarities invited"—specifically, with origin legends of the *adventus Saxonum*.[51]

These arguments rely on texts ranging from Tacitus's *Germania* of 98 C.E. to Middle High German and late medieval Irish vernacular texts, so the chronological development of such narratives is difficult to define. However, we can say more certainly that some of these objects bearing images of Romulus and Remus were produced in Kent and Mercia or Northumbria in the early 8th century, and that they all precede the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* accounts of founder ancestors. Might we not rather, then, highlight how the Romulus and Remus legend was known and used by Anglo-Saxon rulers, ecclesiastics, and elites in the period in which their own ethnic origin legends were coming into being? Nicholas Howe has suggested that Bede's account may have been influenced by the story of Romulus and Remus, while Guy Halsall has emphasized the relevance of the legend to various supposedly 'Germanic' origin myths, pointing out that Jordanes wrote the *Getica* as a pair with his *Romana*.[52] The objects from 5th- and 8th-century Britain provide further evidence that the literary production of origin legends for 'barbarian' peoples occurred within a milieu familiar with both the content and the political use of the Roman foundation myth.

The image has been linked more specifically to the founder ancestors of the East Anglian royal house. It had long been supposed that Æthelberht of East Anglia used the image of the wolf on his coins as a symbol of his royal dynastic identity. This connection derived, it was claimed, from a pun on the name of Æthelberht's dynasty, the Wuffings, and the argument was strengthened by the suggestion that the East Anglian royal house claimed Caesar also as an ancestor through its genealogy. The 2003 discovery of the coin of Offa with the same image cast doubt upon this explanation.[53] In any case, it is unneces-

50 Rovelli, "Fall of Rome to Charlemagne," p. 72.

51 Neuman de Vegvar, "Travelling Twins," pp. 264–66 (quotation p. 266).

52 Howe, *Migration and Mythmaking*, pp. 62–63; Halsall, *Barbarian Migrations*, pp. 460–61.

53 Gannon, "Three Coins," pp. 299–302; Sam Newton, *The Origins of Beowulf and the Pre-Viking Kingdom of East Anglia* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 108–09.

sary to invoke genealogy to explain the connection. The coin itself created the desired association between the king and the image of Roman authority: with Æthelberht's name on the obverse, and the wolf and twins on the reverse, the link was made by material means. Early medieval genealogies incorporated eminent ancestors into royal houses in order to complete a similar aim: we should see this coinage as an alternative to genealogy, performing an equivalent function, rather than as necessarily referring to the same origin legend.

Finally, we need to consider the wider geographical currency of these images, rather than just the local. In early medieval England, visual representations of the wolf and twins may have gained specific meanings and connotations, drawing on particular folkloric associations of wolves and the contemporary significance of Rome. However, the image transcended ethnic identification and would have been familiar throughout early medieval Europe. It may not be coincidental that two Anglo-Saxon examples of wolf and twins were discovered outside the British Isles: the Franks Casket came to antiquarian attention in Auzon, Haute-Loire, France, while one of the Æthelberht coins emerged in Tivoli, near Rome.[54] Both objects bear runic Old English inscriptions that would have been unintelligible to the populaces of these two regions (although, interestingly, both also display Latin text in Roman letters), but the images would have been recognized. To a viewer in Francia or Italy, or indeed to a Continental visitor to early medieval England, these objects would have communicated both similarity—in the appeal to Roman heritage—and difference—in the use of runic script.[55] The meanings ascribed to these objects by their subsequent users and viewers were almost certainly different from those intended by their creators, hundreds of miles and centuries away.

3 Object as Origin Legend: The Horn of Ulf in York Minster

A second means by which objects could transmit origin legends is in their embodiment of the legend itself, prior to the development of any textual narrative. An intriguing example of this is the Horn of Ulf in York Minster

54 George Stephens, *The Old-Northern Runic Monuments of Scandinavia and England*, 4 vols (London, 1866–1901), 1:470–71; P.W.P. Carlyon-Britton, "A Penny of St Æthelberht, King of East Anglia," *British Numismatic Journal* 5 (1908), 73–84.

55 See Helen Foxhall Forbes's discussion of runic graffiti at the shrine of St Michael in central Italy: "Writing on the Wall: Anglo-Saxons at Monte Sant'Angelo sul Gargano (Puglia) and the Spiritual and Social Significance of Graffiti," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 12 (2019), 169–210 (pp. 199–202).

FIGURE 13.4 Horn of Ulf, perhaps 11th century. York Minster

(Figure 13.4).[56] This ivory horn is categorized as an 'oliphant,' made from the hollow section of an elephant's tusk and carved with decorative designs; some 80 examples survive from medieval Europe.[57] The Horn of Ulf has a faceted but plain body between zones of carved decoration near either end. A wide frieze of fantastical animals parades around the wide mouth of the oliphant, facing each other across rather ornate trees; they resemble a griffin, a dragon, a unicorn-like beast, and a lion attacking a deer, and smaller creatures appear above them, below them, and from the ends of their tails. Underneath are two narrow bands of foliate designs, and two more near the tapered end. These bands lie either side of two inscribed silver-gilt mounts added in the 17th century, to which is attached a chain, and the Horn is also mounted with metal rims at either end. In an important art-historical reassessment, Mariam Rosser-Owen has demonstrated the likelihood that most oliphants were created in Italy, principally in the south, from the late 11th century and throughout the 12th. The Horn of Ulf is part of a group that may be attributed more specifically to a workshop in Amalfi or Salerno.[58]

56 Avinoam Shalem, *Die mittelalterlichen Olifante*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 2014) pp. 270–74 (B4).

57 Mariam Rosser-Owen, "The Oliphant: A Call for a Shift of Perspective," in *Romanesque and the Mediterranean: Patterns of Exchange across the Latin, Greek and Islamic Worlds c. 1000– c. 1250*, ed. Rosa Bacile (London, 2015), pp. 15–58; Shalem, *Die mittelalterlichen Olifante*.

58 *The Salerno Ivories, Objects, Histories, Contexts*, ed. Anthony Cutler, Francesca Dell'Acqua, Herbert L. Kessler, Avinoam Shalem, and Gerhard Wolf (Berlin, 2016). Rosser-Owen, "The Oliphant," esp. pp. 34–6, 47–50, argues against the 'Islamic' interpretation proposed by Avinoam Shalem, *The Oliphant: Islamic Objects in Historical Context* (Leiden, 2004).

Tradition holds that a nobleman named Ulf gave the Horn to the Minster sometime in the 11th century, as a mark of his donation of extensive landed property. Two 16th-century references add the detail that Ulf was the son of a certain Thorald; this identification has generally been taken as authentic, though we should be cautious because of the late date at which it is first recorded.[59] The tradition as a whole, however, is highly plausible. We could list various examples of objects presented as gifts in themselves or as symbols of land transactions.[60] In his early Norman history *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum* (*c.*1015), contemporary with the supposed date of Ulf's donation, Dudo of Saint-Quentin had the viking Rollo declare to King Æthelstan, "The kingdom which you have given to me of your own accord I return to you by this sword, which has a hilt bearing twelve pounds of gold."[61] The act was almost certainly fictional, but the gesture must have made sense, and further examples demonstrate that a sword was seen as an appropriate object for transfer of a kingdom.[62] More regularly, land was transferred by objects such as a knife, staff—or horn.[63] In the central Middle Ages, rituals of vassalage incorporated symbolic objects in similar ways, and a horn acted as a symbol for the custom of *cornage*.[64] In the early medieval cases, however, we may see the material object used as an alternative, or occasionally a complement, to a textual charter. It was not always necessary for the object to bear any particular resemblance or connection to the gift, although it has been suggested that

59 The first reference to Thorald is given in an inventory list, which records that the Minster treasurer John Neuton (1393–1414) provided the horn "ex dono Ulfi filii Thoroldi" with a new mount or hanging strap: *Fabric Rolls of York Minster*, ed. James Raine, Surtees Soc. 35 (1859), p. 223; Samuel Gale, "An Historical Dissertation upon the Ancient Danish Horn Kept in the Cathedral Church of York," *Archaeologia* 1 (1770), 168–82 (p. 181); Sarah Brown. The Mystery of Neuton's Tomb. In *1414: John Neuton and the Re-Formation of York Minster Library*, History of Art Research Portal. Available at https://hoaportal.york.ac.uk/hoaportal/yml1414essay.jsp?id=10. Accessed 5 August 2019. The second is in William Camden's *Britannia*, discussed further below.

60 Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 107–08; Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, 3rd ed. (Chichester, 2013), pp. 256–62.

61 Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 41; Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. Jules Lair (Caen, 1865), p. 160.

62 Susan Reynolds, "Afterthoughts on 'Fiefs and Vassals,'" *Haskins Society Journal* 9 (2001 for 1997), 1–15 (pp. 9–12).

63 Emily Zack Tabuteau, *Transfers of Property in Eleventh-Century Norman Law* (Chapel Hill, 1988), pp. 127–29; Shalem, *Oliphant*, pp. 120–24.

64 Jacques le Goff, "The Symbolic Ritual of Vassalage," in idem, *Time, Work and Culture in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 237–87; Reynolds, "Afterthoughts," pp. 9–12; John Cherry, "Symbolism and Survival: Medieval Horns of Tenure," *Antiquaries Journal* 69 (1989), 111–18.

the horn symbolized hunting land.[65] Perhaps more important was the object's association with its previous owner—its prior life history. In order to continue in their function as symbolic of the gift, objects needed to have narratives spun around them.[66] In the eyes of their medieval users, the life histories of things gave them their meaning—perhaps even more than their physical form.

In the repeated telling of this story throughout the Middle Ages and up until the present, Ulf acted as an eminent 'ancestor' for the Minster (although, of course, he was not the only figure of note in the Minster's genealogy). Historical investigation of the case has concentrated on identifying Ulf and assessing the authenticity of the legend.[67] Art-historical discussion, on the other hand, focuses on the Horn as an example of an oliphant, and has been concerned primarily with the location and milieu in which this type of object was created. Moreover, as Rosser-Owen has pointed out, the early 11th-century date suggested by the historical tradition has until recently been used by art historians as a fixed point for the Horn of Ulf's manufacture and donation.[68] Historians, therefore, cannot use the art-historical dating of the object to the early 11th century in support of the historicity of the tradition: in fact, recent assessments of the Horn suggest the 1080s as a more likely time of manufacture. On the whole, scholarly interest has focused on the origins of the object, not the messages it conveyed, and on the historicity of the origin story, rather than its transmission, elaboration, and social impact.

Yet the narrative tradition associated with the Horn has not remained stable over the centuries: the object has been framed within the Minster and interpreted by its visitors in various ways. Our earliest evidence (other than the object itself) is provided in the fabric of the building, in representations of a faceted horn carved in relief high on the stone walls of the nave (1290s; Figure 13.5), the Lady Chapel, and the south choir arcade. In each case, the horn appears alongside a heraldic shield, *vert, six lioncels or*. The coat of arms must have been newly developed for the first of these representations and retrospectively attributed to Ulf as a pre-Conquest figure: while heraldic conventions were not yet in use in the 11th century, it was relatively common by the mid-13th century to attribute fictitious arms to historical (and even biblical) figures. The scheme of the new nave, adorned with the heraldic shields of lay

65 Rosser-Owen, "The Oliphant," p. 46.

66 E.g. Mathieu Arnoux, "Before the *Gesta Normannorum* and beyond Dudo: Some Evidence on Early Norman Historiography," *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (1999), 29–48 (pp. 35–36).

67 Gale, "Historical Dissertation"; Robert Davies, "The Horn of Ulphus," *Archaeological Journal* 26 (1869), 1–11; T.D. Kendrick, "The Horn of Ulph," *Antiquity* 11 (1937), 278–82; David Woodman, ed., *Charters of Northern Houses* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 8–9.

68 Rosser-Owen, "The Oliphant," pp. 34, 48.

FIGURE 13.5 The horn and arms of Ulf depicted on the wall of the nave, *c.*1290s, York Minster

patrons in each bay, explains the impetus for the arms' creation.[69] Perhaps the lions were chosen to resemble the fabulous beasts depicted on the Horn.

The invention of the arms was a successful elaboration of the Horn's story, and they were consistently represented in subsequent medieval depictions in stone and glass throughout the cathedral.[70] Additionally, a stained-glass window in the choir, of around 1400, depicts the Horn twice—once in the hand of a male figure, and once above his head. The stone carvings show the Horn hanging, suggesting that the real object may have been suspended in the cathedral for all to see.[71] The Minster representations probably needed an interpreter, however. The window with the two horns, in particular, is so high as to be indecipherable to the viewer on the ground.

Wooden *tabulae* displaying accounts of the Minster's history furnished this interpretation from the end of the 14th century onwards. These 'visitors' guides' to the cathedral displayed various documents of interest on parchment pasted onto wooden boards, including a metrical chronicle which contains the first

69 Sarah Brown, *York Minster: An Architectural History c. 1220–1500* (Swindon, 2003), pp. 91, 122–25.

70 One window in the nave includes also a derivative coat of arms now designated 'son of Ulf,' presumably on account of its related heraldic composition.

71 Parallels in Shalem, *The Oliphant*, pp. 126–28.

FIGURE 13.6 York minster library additional MS 533, *c.*1400

textual reference to the Horn (Figure 13.6).[72] The text states that it was written in the time of Archbishop Thomas Arundel (1388–96), and apparently for this very purpose, since it also refers to its own function and placement within the

72 York, York Minster Library, Additional MS 533, panel 2. The extant *tabula* bearing the text of the metrical chronicle, which dates from *c.*1400 (and so, if not the original version, is an early copy), has been overlooked in scholarly treatments of the Horn of Ulf, largely because Kendrick, "The Horn of Ulph," stated that the 15th-century manuscripts were the earliest still surviving. On *tabulae* in general: Michael Van Dussen, "Tourists and *tabulae* in Late-Medieval England," in *Truth and Tales: Cultural Mobility and Medieval Media*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (Columbus, 2015), pp. 238–54; Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England: c. 1307 to the Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), p. 495 (Appendix E).

Minster.[73] The chronicle claims that the Horn "testifies to" Ulf's generosity, signalling that the visitor was expected to be viewing the object while they read the narrative information about it.[74] It follows historical and literary sources in linking York to national developments; Ulf is sandwiched between Cnut and Edward the Confessor. (The chronicle, incidentally, includes an abundance of origin stories, preceding the *adventus Saxonum* with an account of the founding of a temple at York by Ebraucus 1200 years before Christ, based on Geoffrey of Monmouth; it seems to relate to the East Window which includes the figure of Ebraucus.)[75] Since the text is in Latin, it is likely that many visitors accessed it through oral translation and discussion.[76] The chronicle framed and interpreted the object—but the object remained the central focus, communicating directly with the viewer.

These representations of the Horn and its donor tied both to the Minster as an important part of its history and reinforced the narratives told about the object. In his *Britannia*, William Camden recounted the story of the Horn as part of his account of York Minster's history, despite it having been removed in the Reformation.[77] Camden stated that his information came "from an old book" (ex veteri libero), which is transparently the metrical chronicle. However, he added further details after this. The new story told by Camden elaborated on the reasons for Ulf's gift by introducing a dispute over inheritance between Ulf's sons. William Dugdale, visiting in the 17th century, referred to

73 *Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops*, ed. James Raine, Rolls Series 71 (London, 1886), pp. 446–68 (p. 446): "Hic Eboracensis temple, metropolis, Urbis, Ecclesiaeque statum praesens pandit Tabulatum … Haec ex archivis de multis paucula scripsi; Ne lateat latebris Tabula sic publice fixi. Nunc pater et primas haec dum descipta fuere, En quartus Thomas praesidet et cathedrae; Ecclesiae jura noscas ut carmine plura, Plenius in Tabula scribitur historia."

74 *Historians of the Church of York*, p. 339: "Cornea buccina, candida, lucida, testificatur | Munus et eximium largifluum Comitis."

75 M.L. Holford, "Locality, Culture and Identity in Late Medieval Yorkshire" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 2001), p. 130.

76 Holford, pp. 129–30.

77 William Camden, *Britannia*, 3rd ed. (1600): "Quod cornu ad patrum usque memoriam reservatum fuisse accepimus" ("Which horne was there kept as a monument (as I have heard) until our fathers daies"). As Gale demonstrated ("Historical Dissertation," 1750), the Horn was sold during the Reformation, before being returned by Henry, Lord Fairfax in 1675. (This does then raise the question of where the Horn was for over 100 years, before Dugdale saw it in the possession of Henry's father Thomas in 1666—and if it is in fact the original Horn.)

the stone carvings in the Minster in the absence of the Horn itself, and sought out the object in the possession of Thomas, Lord Fairfax.[78]

To a degree, textual accounts of the Horn allowed the narrative to separate from the object. The metrical chronicle was copied in at least two manuscripts in the 15th century, which disseminated it as part of York's history further afield.[79] Camden, too, drew on the metrical chronicle rather than observation of the object, and his account then seems to have become the definitive version, widely printed and read. A late 17th-century visitor, Celia Fiennes, had either read or been told a version of Camden's story, since she explained the donation as being due to "a dislike to disobedient Children."[80] However, Celia had also seen the Horn itself, restored to its home in the Minster, and provided the additional comment that it was used as both a hunting horn and a drinking horn—its function being an obvious question to ask of the object. The textual accounts now governed the narrative, but visitors also sought new information from their encounters with the object itself. Unlike a text, the Horn was not easily reproducible; even the various attempts made, from an 18th-century engraving to the first photographs published alongside Thomas Kendrick's 1937 article, cannot give a sense of the size, weight, and materiality of the object.[81] It has to be seen—and perhaps held, heard, or even drunk from—to convey its messages in full.[82]

Moreover, the Horn's appearance had changed again by the time Celia saw it, and it was now "tipt with Silver and Garnish'd over and Engrav'd ffinely all double Gilt wth a Chaine": the silver fittings in which the Horn was remounted by Henry, Lord Fairfax (Thomas's son) before he restored it to the Minster in 1675. On these fittings, Fairfax inscribed an account of the Horn's history,

78 William Dugdale, "A Historical Account of the Catholic Church of York," p. 7, quoted in Gale, "Historical Dissertation," pp. 169–70.

79 London, British Library, Cotton MSS Titus A XIX, fol. 8b (provenance Kirkham Abbey: see Jeanne E. Krochalis, "History and Legend at Kirkstall in the Fifteenth Century," in *Of the Making of Books: Medieval Manuscripts, Their Scribes and Readers; Essays Presented to M. B. Parkes*, ed. P.R. Robinson and Rivkah Zim (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 230–56) and Cleopatra C IV, fol. 16. Holford adds London, British Library, MS Harley 1808 to this list (Holford, p. 129).

80 Celia Fiennes, *Through England on a Side Saddle in the Time of William and Mary*, ed. Emily Griffiths (London, 1888).

81 The Minster's Undercroft Museum contains a life-size replica for visitors to lift; similarly, the Muri horn discussed below was recreated in wood by the abbey before it gave it away, and the replica is now in the Museum Aargau (Switzerland): http://museumaargau.ch/blog/objekt-des-monats-44-das-reliquienhorn-aus-dem-kloster-muri/ Accessed 21 August 2019.

82 On sounding and drinking from horns, Shalem, *The Oliphant*, pp. 131–35.

thus adding himself as an illustrious donor in the lineage of the Horn's original owner, so that Samuel Gale in 1755 now called it "a noble monument of modern, as well as ancient piety."[83] The object was now inscribed with its own biography. In this respect, it resembled even more closely an oliphant in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna which seems to have originated in the same workshop.[84] Its own history is directly inscribed into the plain body of this oliphant, in a Latin text recording that Count Albert von Habsburg "enriched this horn with holy relics" in 1199.[85] The gift was made to the Abbey of Muri (Switzerland), which held it until 1702, when the abbey in turn presented the oliphant to the contemporary Habsburg emperor.[86] The inscribed biography had formed a relationship between the object, the abbey, and the Habsburg line which continued over the space of five centuries and influenced the Horn's future travels.

Does the Horn of Ulf reveal anything else about itself as a means of narrative transmission? I have suggested that the beasts that decorate the Horn may have inspired the lions on Ulf's coat of arms, while Davies suggested a connection between these beasts and the owner's name (which means 'wolf').[87] The most striking fact about the Horn is the distance of its own origins, first as an elephant's tusk likely in sub-Saharan West Africa and then in its transformation into an oliphant in southern Italy.[88] Despite this, and despite its decoration with Mediterranean designs and fantastical beasts, the Horn has always been associated with a northern nobleman and the pre-Conquest city of York. Camden situated it in the Anglo-Saxon period, before the arrival of the Danes, while antiquarians and more recent historians have investigated the historical personage of Ulf as a member of York's Anglo-Scandinavian elite. The origins of the material, the design, and the actual manufacture seem largely irrelevant to the legend that grew up around it.[89] The importance of the object's foreignness, its distinctive appearance and exotic material within the cathedral,

83 Gale, "Historical Dissertation," p. 182.

84 Hanns Swarzenski, "Two Oliphants in the Museum," *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts* 60 (1962), 27–45 (pp. 34, 37).

85 Relics, of course, were the prime medieval example of objects that carried narratives, though they may not have been viewed as objects by their users.

86 Vienna, Kunshistorisches Museum, Kunstkammer 4073. Sogenannter Olifant Graf Albrechts III. von Habsburg. Available at https://www.khm.at/objektdb/detail/90080/ Accessed 21 August 2019.

87 Davies, "Horn of Ulphus," p. 11.

88 Rosser-Owens, "The Oliphant," p. 202.

89 Elsewhere in its narrative, the metrical chronicle makes a pun on *Eboracum* (York) shining as if it were made *ex ebore* (from ivory), but if such a pun was intended in the reference to the Horn, it is very subtle (*Historians of the Church of York*, p. 447).

treasury, or museum, is surely that it provokes the question 'how did it get here?'—the question that the origin legend answers. But its displacement has been answered in terms of secular wealth or Scandinavian mobility, rather than with any links to the object's real, historical origins much further south.

The Horn of Ulf, however, is one of around 80 oliphants held in western European ecclesiastical treasuries in the Middle Ages. The intrinsically local story attached to it, and the reconstruction of its narrative framing within York Minster, may be more broadly contextualized. Oliphants, such as that in Muri Abbey, were associated elsewhere with lay donors, but also used as reliquaries; others accrued legends giving them magical properties or linking them to famous figures—the most well known, of course, being Charlemagne's horn in Aachen which gave the group their name.[90] The diversity of these stories is indicative of the range of meanings that oliphants could convey, but the similarity of their biographies in other respects suggests that patterns may be found. To do so, however, would require detailed analysis of each oliphant's presentation and narrative role over time, along the lines of that presented here. Moreover, the Horn of Ulf may be categorized in other ways, too. Rosser-Owen has argued that it should be understood within a broader category of horns, rather than a modern art-historical classification. These examples may lead into a more general consideration of how objects within medieval church treasuries embodied myths about their communities.[91]

We cannot know for sure the stories that were told about the Horn over the centuries, since we only have fragments of evidence. Yet, even if the basic components of the origin story remained essentially the same, the significance and social impact of the legend evolved to fit the Minster's and its visitors' needs. The Horn of Ulf seems, in the Middle Ages, to have represented pre-Conquest lay patronage of the Minster, carrying that heritage through into the new building. The destruction of the Anglo-Saxon cathedral, library, treasures, and archives in 1069 may have determined the choice of object or its role.[92] No doubt the Minster clergy were eager to encourage lay donations. Latterly, it has become symbolic of the presence—and support—of Anglo-Scandinavian nobility in York, and most recently of the viking impact on the city. If you visit the Undercroft Museum of the Minster, you will now find the Horn presented as "a viking gift," while a detail from the incised decoration, showing a

90 Shalem, *The Oliphant*, pp. 107–35.

91 Philippe Cordez, *Trésor, mémoire, merveilles: Les objets des églises au Moyen Âge*, L'histoire et ses representations 11 (Paris, 2016), p. 97.

92 Christopher Norton, "York Minster in the Time of Wulfstan," in *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York: The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference*, ed. Matthew Townend, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 10 (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 207–34 (pp. 207–12).

dragon-like creature, illustrates the introductory panel for the Minster's early history under the headings "A Crossroads of Empires" and "Waves of invaders." The story of Ulf and his Horn is flexible enough to mould itself into an explanation for various aspects of York's, and York Minster's, history—and it is only very recently that it has had an ethnic label attached to it.

4 Conclusions

These two very different case studies indicate some of the ways in which early medieval objects conveyed narratives and tied those narratives to identities. In this sense, objects were analogous to texts and did operate under similar ideological pressures. Yet objects also operated in distinct ways. Images could attract metaphorical and multiple readings and create associations through their employment on particular kinds of objects or in adaptations to iconographical models. Distinctive objects could act as anchors for changing narratives, or be tied to specific places and meanings by visual echoes and by how they were exhibited. Objects, more so than texts, featured in their own narratives.

However, it is difficult to read those narratives directly from the objects which, as we have seen, could convey multiple meanings. Contemporary parallels, particularly from elsewhere in western Europe, can assist in their interpretation. In particular, we cannot assume that exotic objects and imported iconographies were read as 'foreign.' It may be that their users did not know—or care—where they had been created. Different aspects of the object's biography may have held more relevance than its ultimate origins. When investigating the life histories of objects, we must be careful not to conflate our own research into their travels and display with early medieval perceptions.

As well as being analogous to texts, objects interacted with them. In the case of Romulus and Remus, images had originally derived from the narrative, and seem to have been adapted under knowledge of textual accounts. However, they also operated as a distinct line of transmission. The Horn of Ulf, on the other hand, may at first have acted in place of a text (a charter), and much later stimulated the production of textual narratives. In both cases, the texts and objects provide distinct forms of evidence to the historian: not corroboration, but complexity. Objects, of course, are enmeshed with texts and speech, places and performances. If we are interested in the reception and social function of origin legends—for instance in linking them to identities—then we need to think about the multiple, overlapping ways in which early medieval people and their successors engaged with these narratives.

These observations lead to further strands of research not considered here. The materiality of early medieval objects is an area under increasing investigation, and could profitably be pursued in relation to origin legends. Exploring the embodied nature of early medieval people's interactions with material culture would help us to address the emotional aspects of identity, as well as its political manipulation, which has come to dominate in discussions of origin myths. This might allow incorporation of personal items—such as brooches—that have previously featured in discussion of origin legends. If information can be gathered for the narrative role of specific personal objects, this may provide some insight into individual identification with origin legends that existed in the early Middle Ages—something that texts do not reveal.

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CHAPTER 14

Historiography and the Invention of British Identity: Troy as an Origin Legend in Medieval Britain and Ireland

Helen Fulton

In the medieval world order, which preceded the formation of what we now call nation-states, claims to nationhood competed with the larger ambitions of imperialism. While empires were essentially territorial, nations called themselves into being through discourse, through the sheer force of a shared language, shared culture, and the power of stories. Writing about the modern world, the historian Robert Holton has referred to a 'Fourth World' of "peoples or nations who are politically and culturally distinct but who do not possess a state apparatus with sovereign control of a given territory."[1] This was the status of Wales and Ireland throughout most of the Middle Ages, as nations without sovereign statehood, a political role exercised on their behalf, and through their subjection, by the kingdom of England.[2]

Given their relative lack of political power and sovereignty, a sense of nationhood in Wales and Ireland had to be created and asserted all the more vigorously, and it typically defined itself in opposition to the imperial power of the Norman and then English state. Claims to nationhood sometimes expressed themselves physically, in the form of warfare (though the jurisdictions of Wales and Ireland were each fragmented among a number of kings, which militated against a sense of shared singular nationhood) but more often through written texts which constructed and articulated, either in Latin or in the vernaculars, a sense of shared identity. One of the most powerful media for this discursive nationhood is the writing of history, recording what seems to be memory but is more often a means of creating new myths out of old ones. A subcategory of historiography is the origin legend, which works to establish the antiquity, and

1 Robert J. Holton, *Globalization and the Nation State*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 22.

2 Medieval Ireland, before the Norman invasion that began in 1167, was arguably 'sovereign,' but that sovereignty was divided up among regional kings, often at war with each other, a situation that also prevailed in much of Wales before 1282. Today Wales and Northern Ireland remain as nations which are not states. The Republic of Ireland, on the other hand, achieved sovereign statehood in the early 20th century after centuries of armed struggle.

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thus the legitimacy, of a particular people and their culture in terms of their attachment to a specific territory. Associated with these two strategies are the legends of heroes, historical or fictional, whose deeds as gifted warriors and leaders call a people into being through their role as followers.

These three strategies of discursive nationhood come together in the story of Troy as it was used by Welsh and Irish writers. It was received as if it were history—hence the value given to apparently eyewitness accounts—and it was given narrative prominence as an origin legend. Its heroes were positioned as founding fathers of the nation and role models for its male leaders. This use of the Trojan legend was not, of course, exclusive to Ireland and Wales; as new peoples emerged following the fall of the Roman empire in the 5th century C.E., narratives of nationhood began to circulate. Even before the end of Roman rule, provincial peoples such as the Gaulish Arverni and the Aedui had claimed Trojan descent and thus kinship with the Romans.[3] After the fall of Rome, in order to distinguish themselves from the generic *barbarii* who brought down the Romans, the peoples who became the Irish, Welsh, Franks, and others looked for origin myths that predated the foundation of Rome and thus legitimized the territories they claimed for themselves as successors to Rome.[4] Such a myth presented itself in the story of Troy and its survivors whose wanderings across Europe led not only to the foundation of Rome but to the beginnings of the national homelands of most of medieval Europe. The transnationalism of the Roman empire was replaced by a protonationalism that worked against the globalism of religion, trade, and the movements of peoples.

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3 The poet Lucan, writing in the middle of the 1st century C.E., notes that the Arverni were "brothers by blood" with the Trojan people (*Pharsalia*, 1.427–8). See D.C. Braund, "The Aedui, Troy, and the *Apocolocyntosis*," *Classical Quarterly* 30 (1980), 420–25, on p. 420.

4 Chris Wickham notes that "the Roman empire in the West was replaced by a set of independent kingdoms which did not make claims to imperial legitimacy," and that this change was accompanied by "shifts in imagery, values, cultural style" which mark the transition from the late Roman world to the early Middle Ages. Chris Wickham, *The Inheritance of Rome: Illuminating the Dark Ages, 400–1000* (London, 2009), pp. 95–96. The fall of Troy is associated with the origins of the Frankish nation in the 7th-century *Chronicon* of pseudo-Fredegar, the early 8th-century *Liber historiae Francorum*, and the 9th-century universal chronicle written by Freculph of Lisieux. See Richard Waswo, "Our Ancestors, the Trojans: Inventing Cultural Identity in the Middle Ages," *Exemplaria* 7 (1995), 269–90, especially pp. 269–74. For an overview of the development of Trojan origin stories in Europe, see Tiphaine Karsenti, "From Historical Invention to Literary Myth: Ambivalences and Contradictions in the Early Modern Reception of the Franco-Trojan Genealogy," in *Early Modern Medievalisms: The Interplay between Scholarly Reflection and Artistic Production*, ed. Alicia Montoya, Sophie van Romburgh, and Wim van Anrooij (Leiden, 2010), pp. 93–110.

1 The Trojan Origins of Britain

The earliest surviving reference to the Trojan origins of the British people (and thus their descendants, the Welsh) is found in the 9th-century historical tract, *Historia Brittonum*, attributed to a Welsh monk, Nennius.[5] Starting from chapter 10 of the history, Nennius gives two versions of the origins of the British people. In the first, attributed to "Roman history," Brutus is a descendant of the Trojan Aeneas, the founder of Rome, who was himself descended from Dardanus who built the city of Troy. In the second version, derived from "the ancient books of our ancestors," Brutus's ancestor Aeneas is given a lineage stretching back to Japheth, the son of Noah.[6] Through these two different genealogies, the Britons are given several powerful origins—from Greece, Rome, Alanus the founder of Europe, and Noah, the descendant of Adam.[7] The common factors, of Aeneas and the city of Troy, situated on the Asian side of the Aegean sea, implied a movement from east to west represented by Aeneas's journey to Rome and then Brutus's onward journey to Britain.

The function of Troy as an agent of *translatio imperii*, the transfer of empire and people from east to west, enabled Geoffrey of Monmouth in the 12th century to invoke the Trojan legend for a specific purpose, to claim a transfer of legitimate power from imperial Rome to the British kings and thence, by implication, to the new rulers of Britain, the Normans. It was none other than the Norman kings, according to Geoffrey, who now possessed the cultural and

5 *Historia Brittonum* survives in several recensions, only one of which, dating from the 12th century, has a prologue claiming that "Ego Ninnius," "I, Nennius," wrote the history. While some scholars believe that the prologue is a later addition, Ben Guy has recently argued that the prologue is genuine and that the history was composed by Nennius in 829/30 in Abergele, north Wales. See Ben Guy, "The Origins of the Compilation of Welsh Historical Texts in Harley 3859," *Studia Celtica* 49 (2015), 21–56, especially pp. 47–54.

6 Nennius, *British History and the Welsh Annals*, ed. and trans. John Morris (London, 1980), pp. 10–12. On the two different genealogies in Nennius, see John Creighton, *Coins and Power in Late Iron Age Britain* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 140–41. Creighton speculates that a version of the Trojan origin myth may have been circulating in Britain from the period of the early Roman occupation (pp. 141–43). From the Bible (Gen. 9:18–19) came the information that the whole human race was descended from the three sons of Noah. Latin commentators later assigned a particular continent to each son: the inhabitants of Asia were descended from Shem, those of Africa from Ham, and those of Europe from Japheth. See Daniel Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2002), 13–46, on pp. 14–15.

7 Ben Guy points out that Nennius's pedigree of Brutus as a grandson of Aeneas integrates him into the Virgilian account of Aeneas's journey to Italy in the *Aeneid*, while his descent from Alanus aligns him with the Frankish Table of Nations and the foundation of the peoples of Europe. See Ben Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy* (Cardiff, 2020), p. 236.

political authority which had been passed on from Rome, and which Rome in its turn had received from Troy, "imperial Rome's own lost site of national origins."[8] Just as Virgil's *Aeneid* prefigures the rise of the Roman empire, so Geoffrey's history of Britain is manufactured as an explanatory prequel to the rise of the Norman empire and its authority over the whole of Britain and beyond. For his sources, Geoffrey drew on the three major surviving histories that were available to him, Gildas's *De excidio Britanniae* (*c*.540), Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* (completed *c*.731), and the *Historia Brittonum*, but he clearly had other sources at his disposal relating to the history of the Brittonic peoples of Wales and Brittany.[9]

Geoffrey's *Historia regum Britanniae* (*c*.1138) begins with the aftermath of the Trojan war, when Aeneas fled the ruined city to become the ruler of Italy.[10] His grandson, Brutus, a man shaped in the mould of the traditional hero narrative, became the leader of his people, the Trojan remnant who survived the fall of Troy and now once more suffered severe oppression from the Greeks. With Brutus at their head, an army of dispossessed Trojans fell upon the Greeks and defeated them in a great bloodbath of battle. In telling this story of Brutus's great triumph, Geoffrey has effectively rewritten the history of the Trojan war, but still within an imperial paradigm. Now it is the Trojans who are victorious after breaking a long siege and it is the Greeks who are virtually annihilated and forced to surrender to humiliating terms. Brutus is convincingly established as a sovereign ruler and rightful owner of a kingdom to whom the imperial authority of the Greeks has now passed.

Brutus is made the founder of the nation of Britain by divine decree, and the people he brings to the new land of Britain are all descendants of the original Trojans, representing a racially pure and homogeneous people. Britain is given a single moment of foundation by an illustrious and preordained hero whose followers populate the island of Britain with a pure race of Trojans. Having arrived on the island of Britain, one of Brutus's first deeds is to build a city as his capital, a city which he calls 'Troia Nova,' New Troy. The rehabilitation

8 Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 13. For an account of Rome's two foundation myths, the story of Romulus and Remus on the one hand and the association with Aeneas on the other hand, see Creighton, *Coins and Power*, pp. 137–39.

9 On Geoffrey's knowledge of Welsh material, see Ben Guy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth's Welsh Sources," in *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Joshua Byron Smith and Georgia Henley (Leiden, 2020), pp. 31–66, and Michael A. Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century* (New York, 2014), pp. 19–54.

10 Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1966), pp. 54–73.

of Troy is complete, as if the city had never been destroyed. This is the inheritance which Geoffrey creates for his Norman patrons, a *renovatio* of imperial power based on what purports to be an authentic historical development. Geoffrey's account of Troy's rebirth supports a model of imperial rule which was being revived in his own day, a model in which an autonomous and absolute monarch ruled over a clearly defined territory which he held, not simply by divine right, but by legal right as defined by Roman law.[11]

In Wales, Geoffrey's history made a decisive contribution to Welsh historiography, which had, up until the 12th century, depended on the circulation of Latin annals, genealogies, saints' lives, and copies of *Historia Brittonum*.[12] Geoffrey's work was translated into Welsh (among many other vernaculars) early in the 13th century, with at least three different translations made during that century, surviving in more than 20 manuscripts.[13] Known as *Brut y Brenhinedd*, "The History of the Kings," with *Brut Dingestow* representing another version, the Welsh texts of Geoffrey's *Historia* supported their Trojan origins and their claims to sovereign rulership of Britain even as the advance of the Normans and the final loss of Welsh independence in 1282 emphasized their marginality within the Norman empire. Huw Pryce has pointed to the change of status markers, from *reges*, 'kings,' applied to both Welsh and English leaders by Geoffrey of Monmouth, to *tywyssawc*, 'prince,' applied in *Brut Dingestow* to Cadwaladr's successor, an implied recognition by the Welsh translator that the Welsh princes, in the context of the Saxon conquest, could no longer claim to be kings of the whole of Britain.[14]

Assertions of Trojan origins and the legacy of Rome were all the more relevant to the Welsh sense of national identity as the autonomy of the Welsh nation was slowly eroded. The importance of Troy was not related to its narrative and legendary drama, promoted by writers such as Homer and Virgil, but to its status as historical fact. Only history could attest to the truth of Welsh

11 Walter Ullmann has described how the introduction of Roman law to royal government from the late 11th century onwards led to the secularization of monarchy, which began to trace its authority back to the Roman empire. See *Medieval Foundations of Renaissance Humanism* (Ithaca, 1977), pp. 37–47.

12 Huw Pryce, "Chronicling and Its Contexts in Medieval Wales," in *The Chronicles of Medieval Wales and the March*, ed. Ben Guy, Georgia Henley, Owain Wyn Jones, and Rebecca Thomas (Turnhout, 2020), pp. 1–32, especially pp. 2–6.

13 The manuscripts date from *c.*1300 to the early 16th century. Patrick Sims-Williams, "The Welsh Versions of Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'History of the Kings of Britain,'" in *Adapting Texts and Styles in a Celtic Context: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Processes of Literary Transfer in the Middle Ages*, ed. Axel Harlos and Neele Harlos (Münster, 2016), pp. 53–74.

14 Pryce, "Chronicling and Its Contexts," p. 19.

Trojan origins and British independence. While Homer's work was largely unknown in Britain until the 14th century, his status as a pre-Christian authority was acknowledged by vernacular writers such as Dante and Chaucer.[15] Virgil's *Aeneid*, composed in the 1st century B.C.E., was a key part of the literary heritage of the Latin west and one of the main routes of transmission of the Trojan legend in the Middle Ages. Yet the historical status of their accounts of Troy was held in great suspicion. Both authors were composing their songs long after the Trojan wars had taken place; thus neither of them were eyewitnesses to the events, the gold standard of medieval historiography.[16]

One way of asserting the historicity of Troy was by associating it with religious and universal history, in which events unfold according to God's will. The destruction of Troy was regarded by Greek and Latin historians as a major milestone for arranging world events in chronological order, and was one of the events, and the earliest secular event, used to synchronize national histories, both classical and barbarian, in relation to each other in a tabular form.[17] Thus Freculph of Lisieux (d. *c*.852), whose universal history began with the events described in Genesis, aligns the Trojan war with the time of the Assyrian kingdom before describing the journey of Aeneas to Italy and the subsequent founding of the Frankish people.[18] This model of history can be traced back to the chronicle of Eusebius, compiled in the late 3rd century C.E. and translated into Latin by Jerome (*c*.345–419), which provided a chronological template for all subsequent Christian histories. Augustine's influential *De civitate Dei*, "The City of God," written in the 5th century C.E., followed Eusebius in envisaging a linear structure of universal history where all roads, in every nation, if properly followed, lead to the holy city of God.[19] The city of

15 Marilynn Desmond, "Homer and the Latin West in the Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge Guide to Homer*, ed. Corinne Ondine Pache (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 435–43, especially p. 436.

16 On the authority of eyewitness accounts, see Peter Ainsworth, "Contemporary and 'Eyewitness' History," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden, 2003), pp. 249–76.

17 Helen Fulton, "History and *Historia*: Uses of the Troy Story in Medieval Ireland and Wales," in *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative*, ed. Ralph O'Connor (Cambridge, 2014), pp. 40–57, on p. 47.

18 Marilynn Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, vol. 1, *800–1558*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford, 2016), pp. 251–65, especially pp. 254–55.

19 Alden A. Mosshammer, *The Chronicle of Eusebius and Greek Chronographic Tradition* (London, 1979). See also Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (*A.D. 550–800*) (Princeton, 1988).

Rome, and the city of Troy before it, are part of a genealogy of earthly cities whose pride brings them to a fall.[20]

This linear universalist history, with its starting point in the biblical fall of Adam and Eve, was further developed by Orosius (*c*.375–-418), a student of Augustine, whose *Historia adversus paganos* ("History against the Pagans," *c*.416–17) shows history unfolding according to God's holy design. As one empire is destroyed, another rises to take its place, starting with Babylon and culminating in the foundation of Christian Rome as the greatest empire of all.[21] But like Augustine, Orosius deplores the violence and warfare by which the fall of empires was achieved, and in particular he criticizes Aeneas for his warmongering leading up to the foundation of Rome:

> Furthermore, in the few intervening years, the arrival in Italy of the Trojan fugitive Aeneas, which weapons he would shake, what sort of wars he would arouse over a period of three years, how many people he would envelop in hatred and afflict with destruction, have also been burned into our memories by elementary reading instruction.[22]

The *Historia Brittonum* implied this Christian model of history—linear and aligned with events in biblical history—in its reference to the genealogy of Aeneas which can be traced back to Adam. Geoffrey of Monmouth, on the other hand, was practising a more secular and cyclical model of history based on the deeds of great men and the rise and fall of dynasties, a model derived from Boethius in his *De consolatione Philosophiae*, composed in 524–25.[23] In Geoffrey's *Historia*, it is *gesta*, the actions of men, rather than the unmediated will of God, which precipitate the passage of empire from Greece to Rome to Britain.[24] From this Boethian model of philosophical history, predicated on

20 Francis Ingledew, "The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Speculum* 69 (1994), 665–704, on p. 672.

21 This theory of a succession of world empires is based ultimately on the Book of Daniel. See Alex Mueller, *Translating Troy: Provincial Politics in Alliterative Romance* (Columbus, OH, 2013), p. 21.

22 From Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologiae cursus completus*, Series Latina, vol. 31 (Paris, 1846), pp. 731–32. Cited and translated by Mueller, *Translating Troy*, p. 31.

23 On the *Consolatio* and its reception see Ian Cornelius, "Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae*," in *Oxford History of Classical Reception*, ed. Copeland, pp. 269–92.

24 Geoffrey's own preferred description of his history was *De gestis Britonum*, "Concerning the Deeds of the British People," a title which appears in some of the most reliable manuscripts and is therefore increasingly used by modern historians. See *Geoffrey of Mon-*

the concepts of fate and fortune in human affairs, are derived most historical narratives in the medieval West.[25]

Even Boethian accounts of history, however, had to be certified as truthful and accurate. A Welsh example where religious history is used to confirm the truth of the Trojan wars can be found in the text known as *Y Bibl Ynghymraec*, "The Bible in Welsh."[26] This was a translation of a Latin biblical history called the *Promptuarium Bibliae* compiled by Peter of Poitiers in Paris in the late 12th century, and translated into Welsh in the late 13th or early 14th century.[27] Towards the end of the text, the Welsh translator has diverged from the Latin original to include the genealogy from Noah and his son Japhet which appears in *Historia Brittonum*, leading down to Anchises and his son 'Aeneas Ysgwydwyn,' 'Aeneas Whiteshield,' an epithet not found outside the Welsh tradition of history.[28]

A second way of asserting the historical truth of the fall of Troy, and thus the subsequent origins of the British people, was by citing a historical authority, someone who, unlike Homer or Virgil, had actually been present during the Trojan wars. Such an authority was not hard to find. Manuscripts of Latin histories of the Trojan wars by two different writers, Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, had been circulating widely in Europe since the 9th century and texts of Dares were known to be in Wales by the 14th century.[29] Dares's work, *De excidio Troiae historia*, is a prose account dated to the 6th century C.E., written from the viewpoint of someone on the Trojan side. The account of Dictys, *Ephemeris belli Troiani*, is dated to the 4th century C.E. and represents the viewpoint of a Greek warrior who participated in the Trojan wars. Both texts claim to have been translated from Greek originals, and remnants of a Greek version of Dictys's history, dated to the 3rd century C.E., have been found, though no trace remains of any Greek original of Dares's account.[30] Though Dares's his-

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mouth: The History of the Kings of Britain, ed. Michael D. Reeve, trans. Neil Wright (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. vii–viii and p. lix.

25 F.P. Pickering, *Literature and Art in the Middle Ages* (London, 1970), pp. 169–79.

26 *Y Bibl Ynghymraec*, ed. Thomas Jones (Cardiff, 1940).

27 Thomas Jones, "Historical Writing in Medieval Welsh," *Scottish Studies* 12 (1968), 15–27, on p. 17. The text of *Y Bibl Ynghymraec* is found in the Red Book of Hergest (1382 × 1405) among other manuscripts, indicating its popularity among gentry readers in Wales.

28 The figure of Aeneas is consistently given this epithet of 'Whiteshield' in the Welsh translations of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*, but its origins are unknown. See Rachel Bromwich, ed. and trans., *Trioedd Ynys Prydein: The Triads of the Island of Britain*, 4th ed. (Cardiff, 2014), pp. 348–49.

29 Louis Faivre D'Arcier, *Histoire et géographie d'un mythe: la circulation des manuscrits du "De excidio Troiae" de Darès le Phrygien* (*VIIIe–XVe siècles*) (Paris, 2006), p. 268.

30 Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries," pp. 253–55.

tory is evidently later than that of Dictys, it became the preferred source for vernacular accounts of Troy, mainly because it represented the Trojan viewpoint and was thus a major historical source for the peoples who derived their origins from Troy.[31]

The importance of these texts as historical accounts of the Trojan wars resided in their claimed status as eyewitness reports from the battle front. Unlike Homer and Virgil, whose third-person accounts were imaginative and therefore fictional reconstructions of events, the works of Dares and Dictys could be accepted at face value as first-person factual reportage. One of the most significant ways in which the work of Dares and Dictys diverged from the accounts of Homer and Virgil was in their treatment of the Trojan hero, Aeneas. For Virgil, he was *pius Aeneas*, founder of the Roman nation, and for Orosius he was a dangerous warmonger, but for Dares and Dictys he was a traitor, who betrayed his own people to let the Greeks into the besieged city.[32] In Dares's history, Aeneas and Antenor are presented as the pragmatists who realize that the game is up—the Trojans are surrounded by the Greeks, have lost their best warriors, and have no choice but to submit to the Greeks and make peace. But their king, Priam, is determined to fight on. Aeneas and Antenor therefore betray the city to the Greeks in exchange for the safety of themselves and their followers:

> Antenor et Aeneas noctu ad portam praesto fuerunt, Neoptolemum susceperunt, exercitui portam reseraverunt, lumen ostenderunt, fugam praesidio sibi suisque ut sit providerunt.[33]
>
> That night Antenor and Aeneas were ready at the gate and admitted [the Greek] Neoptolemus. They unbolted the gate to the army, they raised a torch [as a signal], they prepared for escape with protection for themselves and their people.

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31 Freculph of Lisieux and the *Chronicon* of pseudo-Fredegar, reporting the Trojan origins of the Franks, both cite Dares as an authority on the history of Troy.

32 Sarah Spence says that "in Dares' and Dictys' hands Aeneas is a scoundrel, a turncoat who, with Antenor, colludes with the Greeks to bring about the fall of Troy." Spence, "*Felix Casus*: The Dares and Dictys Legends of Aeneas," in *A Companion to Vergil's* Aeneid *and Its Tradition*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C.J. Putnam (Oxford, 2010), pp. 133–46, on p. 137.

33 *Daretis Phrygii De excidio Troiae historia*, ed. Ferdinand Meister (Leipzig, 1873), c. 41, p. 49, my translation. The Latin texts of both Dares and Dictys have been translated by R.M. Frazer, trans., *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian* (Bloomington, IN, 1966), p. 166.

This was the role of Aeneas which entered the medieval vernacular traditions of Troy in France and England, firstly through the Old French verse romance by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, "The Romance of Troy," composed before 1170, and then through Guido delle Colonne's Latin prose adaptation of Benoît, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, "History of the Destruction of Troy" (1287), both of which were based largely on the work of Dares and Dictys.[34] For medieval writers from Benoît to Chaucer, reconciling the treachery of Aeneas with his Virgilian role as the founder of Rome served only to expose the frailty of empire.[35]

Dares's Latin text was translated into Middle Welsh in the early 14th century, very probably to provide the context for the Trojan origins of Britain already made known by Geoffrey of Monmouth. The Welsh *Ystorya Dared* survives in six recensions in over 40 manuscripts, many of which also contain one or more of the Welsh chronicles, particularly *Brut y Brenhinedd* (the Welsh version of Geoffrey's *Historia*), and *Brut y Tywysogyon*, "Chronicle of the Princes," a vernacular version of Latin chronicles up to 1282 which forms a continuation of *Brut y Brehinedd*.[36] In those few manuscripts where the three texts are found together in that order, they form a more or less continuous history of the British people from their Trojan ancestors to the period of the British kings, including Arthur, to the coming of the Saxons and Normans, and finally to the last of the princes of the Welsh, Llywelyn ap Gruffudd, who was killed in battle in 1282.[37] Just as the Welsh were the descendants of the British people who had once ruled the whole of the Island of Britain, so the Welsh were also the descendants of the Trojans through the migration of Brutus from Italy to Britain. The account by Dares of Aeneas's flight from Troy, an account authenticated by his eyewitness version of events, thus confirmed the traditional accounts of Welsh national origins and identity.[38]

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34 David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's "Historia destructiones Troiae" in Medieval England* (Woodbridge, 1960).

35 Helen Fulton, "Origins and Introductions: Troy and Rome in Medieval British and Irish Writing," in *Celts, Romans, Britons: Classical and Celtic Influence in the Construction of British Identities*, ed. Francesca Kaminski-Jones and Rhys Kaminski-Jones (Oxford, 2020), pp. 51–78.

36 Pryce, "Chronicling and its Contexts," pp. 11–15.

37 Helen Fulton, "Troy Story: The Medieval Welsh *Ystorya Dared* and the *Brut* Tradition of British History," *Medieval Chronicle* 7 (2011), 137–50; Owain Wyn Jones and Huw Pryce, "Historical Writing in Medieval Wales," in *Medieval Historical Writing: Britain and Ireland, 500–1500*, ed. Jennifer Jahner, Emily Steiner, and Elizabeth M. Tyler (Cambridge, 2019), pp. 208–24, on p. 219.

38 Patrick Sims-Williams has suggested that the Welsh word *hanes*, 'history,' originally meant something like 'derivation' or 'origins,' as if the basis of history was to explain origins. See

Since Brutus, the founder of Britain, was descended from Aeneas, the founder of Rome, the Welsh historical inclination was to portray Aeneas as Virgilian hero rather than the traitor of Dares's account. The Welsh adaptation of Dares therefore makes some minor modifications to the Latin text which have the effect of showing Aeneas in the best light possible. Following the Latin text, the Welsh version describes how Antenor, Aeneas, and Polydamas together try to persuade Priam to sue for peace with the Greeks, since so many of the best Trojans have been killed and they are outmatched by the Greeks. While Priam plots to kill the treacherous peacemakers, it is Antenor who hatches the plan to open the gates of Troy to the Greeks, a plan to which Aeneas agrees but in a relatively passive way. The Welsh text manages to imply, more clearly than the Latin text, that Antenor was the prime mover of the betrayal and that Aeneas reluctantly agreed only because he saw it as the only way to save his people from destruction by the Greeks. This is the account by Dares:

> Antenor ait se invenisse quod sibi et illis in commune proficiat, quod quo pacto fieri possit dicturum, si sibi fides servaretur. omnes se in fidem Antenori obstringunt. Antenor ut vidit se obstrictum, mittit ad Aenean, dicit patriam prodendam esse et sibi et suis esse cavendum.[39]
>
> Antenor had worked out a way to assist themselves and others for the common good, and he would reveal this plan if their allegiance was promised. All of them bound their word to Antenor. Having seen them thus bind their word, Antenor sent to Aeneas; he said the homeland must be betrayed and they and their people must be safeguarded.

The same section in the Welsh text reads a little differently, though the implied power balance between Antenor and Aeneas remains much the same:

> Ac yna pan welas antenor y gallei ef dywedut y dapar yndiogel idaw. ef a anuones at eneas y venegi idaw ef y gwneynt hwy vrat y gaer, ac ydymogelynt wynteu ae holl wyr. ae da.[40]

"Some Functions of Origin Stories in Early Medieval Wales," in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg et al. (Odense, 1985), pp. 97–131, on p. 99.

39 Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 39, p. 47, my translation.

40 "Ystorya Dared," in *The Text of the Bruts in the Red Book of Hergest*, ed. John Rhys and J. Gwenogvryn Evans (Oxford, 1890), pp. 1–39, on p. 36, my translation.

> And then when Antenor saw that he could tell Aeneas the plan safely, he sent word to him to tell him that they would betray the city and they would be protected along with all their men and their goods.

In the Latin text, Antenor is part of a group of conspirators who present a *fait accompli* to Aeneas. In the Welsh text, Antenor waits until it is 'safe' to reveal his plan to Aeneas, pushing Aeneas further to the margins of the plot. Later, when the Greeks have entered Troy, killing Priam and his troops, and the Greek king Agamemnon confirms that the traitors will be given immunity, the Latin text describes Antenor giving thanks to the Greeks and securing the freedom of a number of Trojan warriors. But in the Welsh text, it is Aeneas who thanks the Greeks, inserting Aeneas into the post-fall negotiations as a leader who has successfully acquired immunity for his people and the preservation of their worldly goods.[41] Whereas Antenor in the Latin text seems servile in his attitude to Agamemnon, the Welsh Aeneas is represented as a noble leader doing his best for his people.

In a further incident in the Latin text, Aeneas tries to hide Polyxena in his father's house when the Greeks storm into the city, but later Agamemnon demands that she be produced. Antenor goes to Aeneas and asks him to hand Polyxena over, and she is then butchered by Neoptolemus (Pyrrus in the Welsh text). The Welsh text leaves Aeneas out of this scene thus avoiding any blame attaching to him for Polyxena's brutal death.[42] But in both the Latin and Welsh texts, Agamemnon is angry with Aeneas for trying to hide Polyxena and that is the reason why Aeneas and his followers are ordered into exile. The last glimpse of Aeneas in both texts is his departure by sea from Troy, but the Welsh text has a small addition. While the Latin simply says: "Aeneas navibus profectus est" (Aeneas departed in ships), the Welsh says: "Eneas a gerdwys ymeith parth ar eidal yny llongheu" (Aeneas sailed away towards Italy in his ships).[43] This key phrase, "towards Italy," anticipates Aeneas's adventures in

41 Rhys and Evans, eds., "Ystorya Dared," p. 38. Compare Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 42, p. 50: "Antenor rogat Agamemnonem, ut sibi loqui liceat: Agamemnon dicere iubet. Principio omnibus Graiugenis gratias agit" (Antenor asked permission from Agamemnon to speak: Agamemnon bid him speak. Firstly he gave thanks to all the Greeks; my translation).

42 Rhys and Evans, eds., "Ystorya Dared," p. 38. Compare Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 43, p. 51. The Welsh text seems to be saying that it was Antenor who had kept Polyxena hidden: "Ac ef ae kauas hi yn ymgudyaw yno" (And he had kept her in hiding then; Rhys and Evans, p. 38, my translation).

43 Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 44, p. 52; Rhys and Evans, eds., "Ystorya Dared," p. 39, my translations.

Italy and the sequence of events that led to the founding of Britain. Though Aeneas undeniably, according to Dares, betrayed the city of Troy to the Greeks, the Welsh version of Dares's account attempts to mitigate the act of treachery and to present Aeneas as a warrior who wanted above all to save his people.

2 Troy and the Origins of the Gaels in Ireland

The confluence of the Troy story with the origin myth of the Gaelic-speaking people of Ireland is a significantly older tradition than that in Wales. In early medieval Ireland, the task of record-keeping, in the form of laws, history, genealogies of kings, and praise-poetry celebrating the kings of Ireland and their deeds, was in the hands of a learned class of men trained in the oral and literary discourses of both Latin and Irish. Already by *c.*740 the Latin "Chronicle of Ireland," based on Bede's *Chronica maiora* with additional notes in Irish, was taking shape, and a version of this chronicle was later incorporated into the north-Welsh *Historia Brittonum* attributed to Nennius.[44]

The early Irish model of history was essentially Eusebian, tracing a linear route from Gaelic-speaking kings and their language back to an authenticated biblical past. According to this model, in which the genealogies of Irish kings and the journeys of their migratory ancestors are synchronized with names and events from the Old Testament, the Gaels, much like the Trojans, moved from east to west, from Scythia (central Asia) to Egypt and back again, and thence to Spain and finally to Ireland. An early poem beginning "Can a mbunadus na nGaedel" (From where is the origin of the Gaelic people?), by the monk Máel Muru Othna (d. 887), describes the ancestors of the Gaels as Greek in origin and descended from the sons of Noah. While living in Egypt in service to Forann ('the Pharaoh'), the migrant warrior Nél, son of Féinius Farsaid the king of Scythia, was given Forann's daughter, Scota, in marriage, from which came a son, Gaedhil Glass. Thus, according to the poem, "the Gaedhil (Gaels) from Gaedhil Glass are called, the Scots from Scota."[45] When Forann drowned in the Red Sea, the Gaels, fearing reprisals, fled across the sea to Scythia from where they were also exiled. Finally they sailed westward through the Mediterranean to Spain, fighting many battles along the way, and, generations later, settled in

44 Katharine Simms, "The Professional Historians of Medieval Ireland," in Jahner et al., eds., *Medieval Historical Writing*, pp. 279–98, on pp. 281–82; Guy, "Origins of the Compilation," p. 30.

45 James H. Todd, ed. and trans., *The Irish Version of the Historia Britonum of Nennius* (Dublin, 1848), pp. 220–71, on p. 231. See also R. Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála*, Part II: The Growth of the Tradition," *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66, on pp. 7–9.

Spain as its territorial rulers. Having seen a vision of Ireland in the distance, the followers of Míl Espáine ('the soldier of Spain'), known as the Milesians, invaded Ireland and made it the new nation of the Gaels.[46]

Myths of Irish origin such as the one recounted by Máel Muru were attracted into a larger compilation of legend and pseudo-history known as *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, "The Book of the Taking of Ireland," or the *Book of Invasions*, which took shape between the 9th and 11th centuries and appears in manuscripts from the 12th century.[47] The basic narrative structure of this complex text, which survives in four recensions and numerous manuscripts, is a chronological description of a series of invasions of Ireland by different peoples, leading up to the arrival of the first Gaelic people, the Milesians. The earliest settlers in Ireland arrived before the Flood, led by Cessair, a granddaughter of Noah, and all of them were wiped out by the Flood, except for Fintan, who survived through the ages and witnessed the subsequent invasions. The settlement of Partholón was marked by battles with the brutish Fomorians, and when Partholón and his followers died from the plague, the Fomorians were left alive to persecute the third wave of settlers, led by Nemed. From the exiled remnant of this people came the Fír Bolg (literally, 'men of bags'), the first of the Irish peoples to be ruled by kings. When the next wave of settlers arrived, the Tuatha Dé Danann, 'people of the goddess Danu,' they came with magical powers that enabled them to defeat firstly the Fír Bolg and then the dreaded Fomorians, who were at last expelled from Ireland. The final invaders of Ireland were the Milesians, skilled warriors who were able to defeat the Tuatha in battle, though the Tuatha were able to use their magic to force a peaceful settlement. The result was that the land was divided into two parts horizontally, with the Milesians living above ground and the Tuatha living below ground in their *síde*, or 'fairy mounds.'[48]

This teleological model of Ireland's prehistory is designed to culminate with the arrival of the Milesians and the beginnings of Gaelic Ireland. But there is another kind of teleology at work as well, which is territorial rather than

46 John Carey, "Did the Irish Come from Spain? The Legend of the Milesians," *History Ireland* 9, no. 3 (2001), 8–11; Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudohistory* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 13–16.

47 R. Mark Scowcroft, "Mediaeval Recensions of the *Lebor Gabála*," in *Lebor Gabála Érenn: Textual History and Pseudo-History*, ed. John Carey (Dublin, 2009), pp. 1–20.

48 Alwyn Rees and Brinley Rees, *Celtic Heritage: Ancient Tradition in Ireland and Wales* (London, 1961), pp. 28–41. An abridged version of the list of Irish invasions is found in the *Historia Brittonum*, indicating that the list was well known in the early 9th century. See Carey, *Irish National Origin-Legend*, pp. 5–9, and his conclusion that "*Historia Brittonum* gives us only the outline of what was already a flourishing tradition of legendary speculation" (p. 11).

cultural. Each wave of settlers leaves its marks on the land. Following the Flood which destroyed Cessair and her people, Partholón clears the land and creates seven lakes, providing a water supply. During the time of Nemed, four more lakes are made and 12 plains are cleared for agriculture. The Fír Bolg divided the land into five areas, the origin of the five provinces of Ireland, namely Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connacht, and Meath. Under the Milesians, the land was split into two layers, creating a mortal world and an otherworld whose interactions determine the shape of Ireland's mythological traditions and sense of ethnic identity. Thus "the geographical definition and identity" of Ireland were "brought into existence" by the long process of movement, arrivals, land management, and the naming of topographical features such as lakes and plains.[49] With the division of the land into five provinces and the introduction of provincial kingship as the model of governance, prehistory merges into the actual historical setup of early medieval Ireland.

The geography of Ireland's origin legend, which culminates in the discovery of a homeland, has clear links with biblical and classical narratives of migratory peoples searching for a territory of their own. It is thus cognate with accounts of the travels of Trojan refugees from the east to the west, such as Aeneas's journey via Crete and Sicily as described in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the same route through the Mediterranean taken by the Gaels. In *Lebor Gabála*, the Gaels at sea on the Mediterranean, en route to Spain, have to contend with the Sirens, and their druid Caicher advises them to put wax in their ears, an incident adapted from Homer's *Odyssey*. John Carey has pointed to the mention in Máel Muru's poem (and again in the *Lebor Gabála*) of the "Maeotic marshes at the estuary of the River Don," where the Gaels stayed for a length of time, and its parallel in Fredegar's *Liber historiae Francorum* where 12,000 Trojans fleeing from Troy also stopped at the Maeotic marshes (in southern Scythia) and built a city there.[50] The use of recognizable place names and biblical references provides some veracity to the pseudo-historical accounts of Gaelic origins, while the parallel direction of travel taken by the Trojans and the Gaels, from east to west, works to link the Irish with the great classical empires of Greece and Rome.

Literary uses made of this Irish origin legend, especially in early Irish sagas and saints' lives, confirm that it was regarded as a legitimate history of the Irish people and how they came to Ireland.[51] Its claims to truth lay partly in its gene-

49 Proinsias Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (London, 1970), p. 57.

50 Carey, *Irish National Origin-Legend*, pp. 15–16. For the reference to the Maeotic marshes in *Lebor Gabála*, see *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, vol. 2, ed. and trans. R.A.S. Macalister (Dublin, 1939), p. 23.

51 John Carey, "*Lebor Gabála* and the Legendary History of Ireland," in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. Helen Fulton (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48, especially pp. 46–48.

alogies, where for example the ancestor figure, Míl, is said to be descended from Noah's son Japhet, and partly in its synchronous linkages of events in Gaelic prehistory with major events of biblical and world history. Most of these reference points occur in later redactions of *Lebor Gabála*, where alignments with world events are interpolated into the narrative. In the early history of the ancestors of the Gaels, Féinius Farsaid and his sons are placed in the same time frame as the building of the Tower of Babel and the reign of Ninus son of Belus, king of Assyria in Greek legend. An interpolation notes:

> Ceatra bliadna dég [ocus] tri fichit [ocus] ocht cet o thús flaithiusa Nín co deired flaithiusa Tútaneis, ri an domain. Is ria lind-sidi ro tóglad Tráe din togail deidenaig. Secht mbliadna iarsan togail co tug Aeniass mac Anicis Lauina ingen Laidin meic Puin.[52]
>
> Eight hundred three score and fourteen years from the beginning of the princedom of Ninus to the end of the princedom of Tautanes, King of the World. Toward his time Troy was captured for the last time. There were seven years after that capture till Aeneas son of Anchises took Lavinia daughter of Latinus son of Faunus.

The fall of Troy is thus inserted into world history as the earliest non-biblical event, giving it a particular prestige as a mark of ethnic antiquity.[53] Other references to Troy mention Hercules, Laomedon, Agamemnon, and Priam, always in the context of synchronizing the Trojan wars with the reigns of the 'world kings' of Assyria.[54] The reference to Aeneas winning Lavinia, daughter of Latinus, king of Latium, alludes directly to Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book 7) and thus invokes the struggle between Trojans and Latins, between east and west, which culminates in the Trojan foundation of Rome. The synchronized time frame puts the travels of the Gaels in roughly the same era as the travels of the Trojans towards Rome, suggesting parallel movements of peoples from Asia to western Europe

52 Macalister, ed. and trans., *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, 2:50–51.

53 Christian Peters, "Claiming and Contesting Trojan Ancestry on Both Sides of the Bosporus – Epic Answers to an Ethnographic Dispute in Quattrocento Humanist Poetry," in *The Quest for an Appropriate Past in Literature, Art and Architecture*, ed. Karl A.E. Enenkel and Konrad A. Ottenheym (Leiden, 2019), pp. 15–46, on p. 16 n. 4. Peters refers here to the work of B. Kellner on medieval genealogy.

54 See for example *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, vol. 3, ed. and trans. R.A.S. Macalister (Dublin, 1940), pp. 158–59. See also Fulton, "History and *Historia*," pp. 50–51.

which culminated in the founding of national homelands. Gaelic Ireland, then, is implicitly compared to Trojan Rome.

Many of the synchronicities in *Lebor Gabála* come from Eusebius's chronicle (via Jerome's Latin translation) and other universal histories. Irish monks would have known, from the 7th or 8th centuries, about the two long-drawn-out sieges of Troy from the chronicles of Orosius, Isidore of Seville, and Bede.[55] It is interesting, then, that one historical source particularly mentioned by the redactors is the *De excidio Troiae historia* of Dares Phrygius:

> Innister sin stáir Dariet, Pentisilia do bith i l-leith na Troianach i cathugud for Gréco, co torchair la Pirr mac nAichil. Masé Tutanes ro bo rí in aimsir togla na Tráe, issa comaimsir fria Hasardaib ro boí Pentisilia; no issin aimsir na Cichloisci ro togladh Trói.[56]
>
> In the history of Dares <Phrygius> it is related that Penthesilea [queen of the Amazons] was on the side of the Trojans fighting against the Greeks, so that she fell by the hands of Pyrrhus son of Achilles. If it was Tautanes who was king at the time of the capture of Troy, Penthesilea was contemporary with the Assyrians; or Troy was captured in the time of the Amazons.

The reference to Dares serves to shore up the historicity of the Irish text by invoking an authority on the Trojan wars whose record of events is so trustworthy that it can be used to calibrate the order of other events happening at around the same time.

Like the Welsh, the Irish made their own translation or adaptation of Dares's Latin text, but much earlier than the Welsh. Due to the close links between Irish monks and Continental *scriptoria*, the Latin text of Dares had been circulating in Ireland from at least the 9th century.[57] The translation of Dares into Irish, *Togail Troí*, "The Destruction of Troy," dates from the late 10th or early 11th century, though it survives only in manuscripts of the 12th century or later.[58] Three recensions have been identified which show layers of stylistic

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55 Leslie Diane-Myrick, *From the "De excidio Troiae historia" to the "Togail Troí": Literary-Cultural Synthesis in a Medieval Irish Adaptation of Dares' Troy Tale* (Heidelberg 1993), p. 84.

56 Macalister, ed. and trans., *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, 3:160–61.

57 In his discussion of the three stages of circulation of Dares manuscripts, Faivre D'Arcier says "le plus ancien est irlandais" (*Histoire et géographie*, p. 340).

58 For a list of manuscripts in which each of the three recensions is preserved, see Michael Clarke, "The Extended Prologue of *Togail Troí*: From Adam to the Wars of Troy," *Ériu* 64 (2014), 23–106, especially pp. 27–28.

and narrative elaboration during the 11th and 12th centuries. Even in the earliest recension, the Irish text is more than a literal word-by-word translation of the Latin, drawing on native prose discourses to produce "a polished narrative which was in harmony with Irish tradition."[59] During the 11th century, new material was added, much of it influenced indirectly by Virgil's *Aeneid*, which was also adapted into Irish in the 11th century as *Imtheachta Aeniasa*, "The Adventures of Aeneas."[60] Working within an essentially monastic context with access to canonical Latin works, Irish clerics fused Latin and vernacular styles to produce the much longer Recension II of *Togail Troí*, which survives in the 12th-century Book of Leinster along with a large collection of native sagas including the *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, "The Cattle-Raid of Cooley."[61]

The importance of *Togail Troí* to early Irish ethnic identity-formation lies partly in its links with classical literature, a prestige tradition with which Irish men of learning wanted to associate themselves, but also in the central framework of the Trojan story in which imperial Greeks are pitted against men of Asia. Even in the relatively unadorned Recension I, which follows the general movement of Dares fairly faithfully while gently expanding it, references to Asia, and one to Scythia, are inserted by the compiler at points in the narrative where no such references occur in Dares. Following the first destruction of Troy by Hercules and the death of Laomedon, his son Priam is said by Dares

59 Uáitéar Mac Gearailt, "*Togail Troí*: An Example of Translating and Editing in Medieval Ireland," *Studia Hibernica* 31 (2000–01), 71–85 (on p. 78).

60 A number of classical works were translated/adapted into Irish during the 11th and 12th centuries, including *Scéla Alaxandair meic Philip*, "The Saga of Alexander son of Philip," *In Cath Catharda*, "The Civil War" (a translation of Lucan's *Pharsalia*), and *Togail na Tebe*, "The Destruction of Thebes," a version of Statius's *Thebaid*. The titles of such adapted works, particularly *togail* ('destruction') and *cath* ('battle') are taken from native Irish categories of story material, possibly indicating an intention to assimilate the classical material into familiar Irish genres, such as *Táin Bó Cúailnge*, "The Cattle-Raid of Cooley." See Máire Ní Mhaonaigh, "Classical Compositions in Medieval Ireland: The Literary Context," in *Translations from Classical Literature: "Imtheachta Aeniasa" and "Stair Ercuil ocus a Bás,"* ed. Kevin Murray (London, 2006), pp. 1–19. Brent Miles has suggested that "there was a 'school' of scholars devoted to fostering the heritage of antique Greece and Rome in Ireland," in "*Togail Troí*: The Irish *Destruction of Troy* on the Cusp of the Renaissance," in *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell (Toronto, 2004), pp. 81–96, on p. 83.

61 Brent Miles argues that the compiler(s) of the longer and more elaborate Recension II version of *Togail Troí* were influenced more by classical rhetorical strategies, such as ekphrasis, than the vernacular tradition of storytelling. See *Heroic Saga and Classical Epic in Medieval Ireland* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 102–43. For examples of Irish narrative style in Recension II, see Robert T. Meyer, "The Middle-Irish Version of the Story of Troy," *Études Celtiques* 17 (1980), 205–18, especially pp. 210–17.

to be "seriously upset because Phrygia had been treated with such contempt by the Greeks," indicating that Priam's rule encompasses Phrygia (Anatolia, in modern western Turkey).[62] The Irish text, however, describes Priam as "crown prince of the Trojans and of Little Asia," extending Priam's rule over much of the lands east and north-east of Troy, and identifying Troy explicitly as part of the Asian continent.[63] While Dares comments that Priam rebuilt and fortified the city of Troy, the Irish text inserts a much longer account of Priam's family, his many sons, and the strength of his fortifications: "Hosts and mighty multitudes of those that had been scattered throughout Phrygia and Little Asia were gathered together that he might have soldiers strong (and) active to keep and to fight on behalf of the city."[64] Later, when the Greeks are preparing for war against Troy, Dares simply lists the allies who come to fight on the Trojan side, while the Irish version explicitly refers to "Europe" as the enemy and "great Asia" as the natural ally of Troy:

> Intan, trá, atchuas in teclomadsa na hEorpa for slúagvd dochvm na Tróidía hindred, dochvas úadib do chvinchid shocraite co a comaithibh [ocus] co hardrígv na hAsía móre, [ocus] tancatar a ríghside [ocus] a tóisigh co slúagaib [ocus] sochaidib do chongnvm fri Troiannu.[65]
>
> Now when this gathering of Europe on a hosting towards Troy to devastate it was announced [to the Trojans], they went to seek armies to their neighbours and to the overkings of great Asia; and their kings and their captains came with hosts and multitudes to help the Trojans.

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62 "Graviter tulit tam contumeliose Phrygiam tractatam esse a Grais" (Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 4, p. 6, my translation). At the time of Laomedon's death, Priam was in Phrygia, in charge of its army (c. 3). When the Greeks prepared for war against Troy, Priam sought allies throughout Phrygia (c. 15).

63 The Irish phrase is "ríghdomna na Troianda [ocus] na hAsia bice." "The Destruction of Troy," ed. Whitley Stokes, in *Irische Texte mit Übersetzungen und Wörterbuch*, ed. and trans. W.H. Stokes and E. Windisch (Leipzig, 1884), pp. 1–141, on p. 8 (l. 173), with English translation on p. 69. I have used Stokes's edition and translation of Recension I as the most appropriate comparator for the Latin and Welsh versions. Stokes also published an edition and translation of the longer Recension II, in *Togail Troí: The Destruction of Troy* (Calcutta, 1881).

64 "Rotinólait slóigh [ocus] sochaidhe móra dona fíb robátar for esróidiud sechnón Frigiae [ocus] Assíae bice, co mbeth ócbath látir lúthbasach aice do ghabáil [ocus] do chathugvd darcend a cathrach" (Stokes, ed., "Destruction of Troy," ll. 197–200, p. 9, translation on p. 70). Compare Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 4, p. 6.

65 Stokes, ed., "Destruction of Troy," ll. 780–84, p. 26, translation on p. 91.

In the earlier conflict with the Greeks, the Trojan Hector, counselling against all-out war, says, according to Dares:

> sed vereri, ne perficere non possent quod conati essent: multos adiutores Graeciae futuros, Europam bellicosos homines habere, Asiam semper in desidia vitam exercuisse et ob id classem non habere.[66]
>
> He feared, however, that they could not achieve the expedition: while Greece would have many allies among the warlike men of Europe, Asia spent its life always in idleness and therefore had no fleet.

The Latin text thus implies that the Trojans were handicapped from the start by their own inactivity and disengagement from the practicalities of war. The Irish version, however, has Hector speaking in the first person, in a long and impassioned speech, with a more complimentary tone towards the men of Asia:

> Fóbíth at lia Greic oldáthe, it ilardai a slúaigh [ocus] a popuil [ocus] a socraite di cech leith fo Eóraip ule … Ár ní bíat acht hi cathaib [ocus] i congalaib [ocus] i cocthib: cech tvath oc orcain [ocus] ic inriud a chéli, co nd[at]athlaimite oc imbirt gái [ocus] sceith [ocus] chlaidib. Ní hinunn [ocus] lucht na hAsíae bice: ní romúinsetar sidé dóib bith i cathaib no i coicthibh, acht i síth [ocus] cáinchomrac [ocus] indess dogrés.[67]
>
> Because the Greeks are more numerous than you are: multitudinous are their hosts and their peoples and their armies from every side throughout the whole of Europe … For they live only in battles and in conflicts and in fights, every tribe slaying and raiding on the other, so that they are the more dexterous in plying spear and shield and sword. Not so the folk of Little Asia. They have not taught themselves to bide in battles or in fights, but in peace and good-will and quiet continually.

In other words, the Irish text constructs the conflict as a war between the men of Europe and the men of Asia, with Europe representing a warlike and aggressive empire constantly seeking to expand its borders and Asia representing peace-loving nations who simply want to maintain their autonomy. Scythia, not mentioned at all by Dares, is name-checked in *Togail Troí* as one of the major territories of the east, along with India, Persia, and Egypt, which are

66 Meister, ed., *De excidio*, c. 6, ll. 19–23, p. 8, my translation.

67 Stokes, ed., "Destruction of Troy," ll. 319–21 and 330–34, pp. 12–13, translation on pp. 74–75.

outside the Greek empire.[68] Though the Irish history of origins set out in the *Book of Invasions* alludes to an ethnically Greek origin of the Irish people, their ancient land of origin was Scythia, part of 'great Asia.' The sympathies of *Togail Troí*, then, are clearly—and more clearly even than in Dares's history—with the peace-loving men of Asia who are routed and almost destroyed by the Greeks.

3 Conclusion

The story of Troy, its fall, and the long aftermath in which a Trojan diaspora spread westwards through Europe, became part of the origin legends and founding national myths of many of the European peoples who emerged after the end of the Roman empire. Combining the antiquity of the Greek empire with the greatness of Rome, the Troy story was a powerful means of legitimizing new nations by giving them a stake in ancient history. For the Welsh and the Irish, the Trojan legends served different, though related, functions. In post-Roman Britain, with the Saxons on the doorstep, there was much more at stake for the British-turned-Welsh. The Trojan diaspora, led by Brutus, which brought Britain into being gave the Welsh a reason for asserting that they had inherited, though their British ancestors, the right to rule the island of Britain. By the 14th century, the English state was already challenging that assertion through stories such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, whose Trojan preface and boyish King Arthur were appropriated as part of English history. It took the mighty propaganda of the 16th-century Tudor kings to wrest the Trojan origin legend, along with its key figures such as Arthur, finally away from the Welsh and attach it ineluctably to themselves, the English.

The Irish account of their origins, on the other hand, was not primarily genealogical but synchronous with events such as the fall of Troy. Unlike the Welsh, they did not consider themselves to be descended from Trojans but as a people whose history ran in parallel to the fortunes of Troy and its diaspora.[69] By using that model in *Lebor Gabála*, the Irish were able to claim an ancient origin while implying an ancestry as illustrious as that of Troy. Moreover, their model of origins, reworked in their adaptations of Dares's *De excidio*, emphasized their

68 Stokes, ed., "Destruction of Troy," ll. 121–22, p. 6, translation on p. 68.

69 Waswo's comment about the Franks applies equally to the Irish: "They are very careful to assert a chronology that shows the Frankish nation to have developed not *from* ancient Rome, but rather parallel to it or even in competition with it – its sibling rather than its child" (Waswo, "Our Ancestors, the Trojans," p. 272, original italics).

links with Asia as well as with Europe, a link that further bound them to Troy and the ancient Greek empire. As a territory that was never occupied by Rome, it is perhaps not surprising that Ireland, unlike Wales, should theorize its origins as unrelated to Rome but instead linked to some of the oldest civilizations known to history—those of the east.

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CHAPTER 15

Origin Legends and Genealogy

Ben Guy

It would scarcely be possible to distinguish between the literary categories of 'origin legend' and 'genealogy.' Stories of origins almost invariably contain a genealogical element that is integral to their structure, while the tracing of a genealogy is all but synonymous with the tracing of origins. Why should this be so? What was the purpose of framing an origin legend in a genealogical context, or using genealogy as a tool to answer questions of origins?

During the Middle Ages, there were, broadly, two frameworks into which an origin legend could be embedded in order to situate it meaningfully in space and time, and thus render it 'culturally legible' for its intended audience. One was provided by the landscape, since it was assumed that the names of places and natural features could be explained through stories. The other was provided by genealogy, and especially the genealogies of ruling families, since, again, it was assumed that the prevailing social structure could be explained through stories. If the landscape, as commonly evoked and narrativized through learned etymological discourse, could situate an origin legend in human space, genealogy could do the same in human time. Not only could genealogy evoke chronological depth in a socially meaningful way, it could precisely demonstrate the intended connections between the literary actors of the origin legend and the political actors of the present day. This was essential for foregrounding the 'aetiological' meaning of the story: in other words, the way in which the story was meant to foreshadow, explain, or even justify the societal realities of the time of the story's conception.[1]

The form assumed by the genealogical component of an origin legend was conditioned by what the story was meant to account for. In the medieval period, origin legends were very often intended to 'explain' the existence of people groups, social groups, dynasties, or political institutions. Since these were ultimately social phenomena comprised of communities of individuals, they could be represented and schematized in a comprehensible manner using genealogical modes of presentation. Examples of genealogical origin legends

1 For 'aetiology' in the context of origin legends and genealogy, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies," in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg et al. (Odense, 1985), pp. 51–96.

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concerning each of these four social phenomena are discussed below. Overall, it is argued that genealogy was so regularly integral to accounts of origins because it provided a precise way to connect the present to the past, allowing writers to stress whichever connections and continuities were relevant to their purposes. Furthermore, by connecting the present to the past, genealogies were themselves capable of representing origins; such was the mentality engendered by a society in which one's status and power were largely determined by one's family relations.

Before proceeding, it is necessary to address two matters that are fundamental to the study of medieval genealogy: the meaning of 'genealogy' in the context of medieval studies, and the influence of the Bible on the literary representation of medieval genealogy. What was 'genealogy' during the medieval period? The concept of 'genealogy' is frequently evoked by medievalists despite the complete lack of agreement as to what it means. For some, following modern understanding of the term, genealogy is a prosopographical process involving the systematic study of family relationships. Modern genealogists can study medieval families using the same methods as they would use to study modern families; medieval 'genealogists' did the same, though their efforts, when subjected to modern scrutiny (and modern positivist 'rules'), are often found wanting.[2] For others, at the opposite end of the scale, genealogy is, instead, a 'conceptual metaphor' that supplied form and meaning to medieval historical literature.[3] On this view, a narrative that is structured according to the passing of generations is inherently 'genealogical.' Thus, it has been said that, in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum*, "British history is … systematically genealogized," while Eusebius's universal chronicle has been described as

2 J. Horace Round's work provides the touchstone for the prosopographical tradition of 'medieval' genealogy in an Anglo-French context: see especially his *Family Origins and Other Studies*, ed. William Page (London, 1930). A more recent collection of studies in the same vein is K.S.B. Keats-Rohan, ed., *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century* (Woodbridge, 1997). It is in this sense, for example, that Robert of Torigni has been described as a 'genealogist': Elisabeth M.C. van Houts, "Robert de Torigni as Genealogist," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, Christopher J. Holdsworth, and Janet L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 215–33.

3 The key work is Gabrielle M. Spiegel, "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historiography," in her *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore, 1997), pp. 99–110 (quotation at p. 105); repr. from her "Genealogy: Form and Function in Medieval Historical Narrative," *History and Theory* 22 (1983), 43–53. Spiegel's views are extended to medieval Icelandic literature by Margaret Clunies Ross, "The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds: Genealogical Structure as a Principle of Literary Organisation in Early Iceland," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 92 (1993), 372–85.

a "universal genealogy of peoples," although neither of these texts is intended primarily to expound genealogical relationships between persons or peoples.[4] Sometimes, the idea of genealogy as 'conceptual metaphor' is applied by scholars so loosely that it loses any real meaning or relevance for the study of the Middle Ages. For example, monastic chronicles organized by abbot have been described as having a "strongly institutional-genealogical perspective"; here, 'genealogy' is used as a *modern* metaphor for the linear passing of generations, even though, ironically, the succession of abbots, in this context, is a specifically *non*-genealogical phenomenon.[5]

More pertinent to the present discussion are the specific types of literary texts that have been identified as 'genealogies.' These belong to multiple, sometimes discreet traditions of genealogical writing, each of which is circumscribed by its own forms and conventions. A few may be named here, though the list is not exhaustive. There is the Insular tradition of genealogy, originating in early medieval Ireland but found also in Anglo-Saxon England and medieval Wales, which is characterized especially by collections of linear ascending pedigrees written in vertical columns down the page.[6] There is the tradition of

4 Quotations respectively from Francis Ingledew, "The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Speculum* 69 (1994), 665–704 (at p. 678) and Frederic N. Clark, "Reading the 'First Pagan Historiographer': Dares Phrygius and Medieval Genealogy," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 41 (2010), 203–26 (at p. 210).

5 Emilia Jamroziak, "Genealogy in Monastic Chronicles in England," in *Broken Lines: Genealogical Literature in Late-Medieval Britain and France*, ed. Raluca L. Radulescu and Edward Donald Kennedy (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 103–22 (at p. 107).

6 The 'Insular' tradition of genealogy is identified and discussed in Ben Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy: An Introduction and Textual Study* (Woodbridge, 2020), chap. 1. The genealogical writings of the Irish, English, and Welsh are more usually discussed in isolation. For essential discussion of early medieval Irish genealogy, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Creating the Past: The Early Irish Genealogical Tradition," *Peritia* 12 (1998), 177–208; for later medieval and early modern Irish genealogy, with an emphasis on modern historiography, see Nollaig Ó Muraíle, "The Irish Genealogies—An Overview and Some Desiderata," *Celtica* 26 (2010), 128–45, expanded in his *Irish Genealogies: Irish History's Poor Relation?* (London, 2016); for a comprehensive bibliography of scholarly works pertaining to medieval Irish genealogy, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, *Clavis litterarum Hibernensium: Medieval Irish Books & Texts (c. 400 – c. 1600)*, 3 vols (Turnhout, 2017), 2:989–1031. For Anglo-Saxon genealogy, see especially Kenneth Sisam, "Anglo-Saxon Royal Genealogies," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 39 (1953), 287–348, repr. in *British Academy Papers on Anglo-Saxon England*, ed. E.G. Stanley (Oxford, 1990), pp. 145–204, and David N. Dumville, "The Anglian Collection of Royal Genealogies and Regnal Lists," *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), 23–50, repr. in his *Histories and Pseudo-Histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990), chap. V. For a comprehensive discussion of medieval Welsh genealogy, see Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*; for the late medieval and early modern periods, see idem, "Writing Genealogy in Wales, *c.*1475–*c.*1640: Sources and Practitioners," in

Carolingian *genealogiae*, which describe the transmission of power through the Carolingian family and propagate the idea that the Carolingians were descended from the Merovingians through Blithild, alleged daughter of Chlothar I.[7] There are the genealogical family histories associated especially with the northern French aristocracy of the late 11th and 12th centuries, which tend to be structured around the biographies of successive family members.[8] There are the diagrammatic genealogical histories inspired by the *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi* by Peter of Poitiers (d. 1205), encompassing works dedicated to universal history as well as the histories of the kingdoms of France and, more especially, England.[9] The list could go on. A problem with assessing these diverse manifestations of medieval 'genealogy' is that the tradition

Genealogical Knowledge in the Making: Tools, Practices, and Evidence in Early Modern Europe, ed. Jost Eickmeyer, Markus Friedrich, and Volker Bauer (Berlin, 2019), pp. 99–125.

7 For a survey of this group of interlinked texts, from the *Commemoratio genealogiae domni Karoli gloriosissimi imperatoris* at the beginning of the 9th century to Lambert of St Omer's *Liber Floridus* in the early 12th century, see Hans Hummer, *Visions of Kinship in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 2018), pp. 288–323. For the historiographical contexts of the earlier texts, see Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge, 2015) (e.g. the *Commemoratio* at pp. 403–04). For the creation of the Carolingian pedigree, see Constance Brittain Bouchard, "The Carolingian Creation of a Model of Patrilineage," in *Paradigms and Methods in Early Medieval Studies*, ed. Celia Chazelle and Felice Lifshitz (New York, 2007), pp. 135–51 (though one must beware such Franco-centric generalizations as the assertion on p. 146 that "Defining families by a clearly marked line of males was a new development around the year 800, in part an attempt to create a genealogy for the Carolingians parallel to that of the Merovingians"). For Blithild, see Ian Wood, "Genealogy Defined by Women: The Case of the Pippinids," in *Gender in the Early Medieval World: East and West, 300–900*, ed. Leslie Brubaker and Julia M.H. Smith (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 234–56.

8 These texts are surveyed in Georges Duby, "French Genealogical Literature: The Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in his *The Chivalrous Society*, trans. Cynthia Postan (London, 1977), pp. 149–57, trans. from his "Remarques sur la littérature généalogique en France aux XI^{e} et XII^{e} siècles," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'année* (1967), 335–45. Examples are discussed in Jean Dunbabin, "Discovering a Past for the French Aristocracy," in *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe*, ed. Paul Magdalino (London, 1992), pp. 1–14.

9 For an overview of genealogical histories inspired by Peter of Poitiers's work, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres: essai sur l'imaginaire médiéval de la parenté* (Paris, 2000), chaps 6–9. For the English tradition of diagrammatic genealogical history in roll format in the 13th and 14th centuries, see Olivier de Laborderie, *Histoire, mémoire et pouvoir: les genealogies en rouleau des rois d'Angleterre: 1250–1422* (Paris, 2013). For briefer surveys of the English and French traditions, see respectively idem, "A New Pattern for English History," in *Broken Lines*, ed. Radulescu and Kennedy, pp. 45–61, and Marigold Anne Norbye, "Genealogies in Medieval France," in ibid., pp. 79–101. For the English tradition in the 15th century, see Alison Allan, "Yorkist Propaganda: Pedigree, Prophecy and the 'British History' in the Reign of Edward IV," in *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England*, ed. Charles Ross (Gloucester, 1979), pp. 171–92.

of scholarship associated with each one tends to assume that the type of text with which it is concerned is the principal form of the medieval genealogical genre. Instead, it would be better to recognize that there are multiple genres of medieval genealogical writing. The writings are all 'genealogies' in the sense that their content is primarily genealogical, but they belong to separate genres in the sense that they were formed and structured according to discrete sets of generic conventions.

So long as the multiplicity of genealogical writing is recognized, it should be possible, and indeed helpful, to distinguish between a text that belongs to a specific genealogical genre and a text that happens to include genealogical information but otherwise follows separate conventions. Léopold Genicot, in his survey of medieval genealogies, attempted something of this kind when he defined his object of study as "une œvre indépendante, écrite ou dessinée pour faire connaitre la filiation d'une famille ou d'un individu" (an independent work, written or drawn in order to make known the relationships of a family or an individual).[10] As already indicated, independent genealogical works belonging to several traditions of genealogical writing do indeed exist, even though the placement of some works in one genre or another is open to debate. Recently, however, some scholars have deliberately sought to ignore such distinctions, preferring instead to absorb explicitly genealogical works into an undifferentiated body of 'genealogical writing,' broadly defined, wherein works belonging to discrete genres of genealogical writing are not qualitatively differentiated from historiographical works merely containing a genealogical element, such as chronicles.[11] This approach seeks to conflate the distinctive types of genealogical writing with works structured by Spiegel's 'conceptual metaphor' of genealogy. While one would certainly wish to consider these bodies of material alongside one another for the purpose of conducting research into, for example, the "consciousness of the aristocracy,"[12] it

10 Léopold Genicot, *Les généalogies*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Âge Occidental A-I.5 (fasc. 15) (Turnhout, 1975, with 1985 supplement), p. 11. For more detailed surveys of genealogy during the early medieval period, with emphases respectively on the Insular and Continental evidence, see David N. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies, and Regnal Lists," in *Early Medieval Kingship*, ed. P.H. Sawyer and I.N. Wood (Leeds, 1979), pp. 72–104, repr. in his *Histories and Pseudo-Histories*, chap. xv, and Walter Pohl, "Genealogy: A Comparative Perspective from the Early Medieval West," in *Meanings of Community Across Medieval Eurasia*, ed. Eirik Hovden, Christina Lutter, and Walter Pohl (Leiden, 2016), pp. 232–69. For a survey of genealogical diagrams from across the medieval period, see Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres*.

11 For example, Norbye, "Genealogies in Medieval France," pp. 79–80, and Hummer, *Visions of Kinship*, pp. 270–71.

12 Hummer, *Visions of Kinship*, p. 271.

is unhelpful and misleading to ignore the formal and structural conventions that affiliate a genealogical text with a particular genre of genealogical writing. These distinctions are important to bear in mind when approaching medieval origin legends, since the genealogical element of such a legend may be fashioned according to the mores of a specific genre of genealogical writing, and thus require interpretation informed by that tradition's system of meaning creation.

Most types of medieval origin legend and genealogy owe a profound debt to the Bible. The Bible furnished medieval writers with a large repository of exemplary models for constructing aetiological narratives within a genealogical framework.[13] Although one can be sure that the idea of representing present-day political and social relations through the actions and relationships of past individuals connected through genealogy was embedded in medieval society from the beginning, it was the Bible that inspired the literary representation of this idea in medieval texts. The influence of the Bible is visible at the verbal, structural, and eschatological levels. At the verbal level, the Bible provided the appropriate terminology and verbal structures for describing filial relationships in a regularized and formulaic manner. Thus, the Merovingian *Generatio regum*, a genealogical king-list composed between 623 and 639 while Dagobert I was king of Austrasia, uses the biblical 'genuit' (begot) formula to describe filiation, just as in the genealogy of Jesus that forms the first chapter of the Gospel of Matthew.[14] The same can be seen in a group of Navarrese genealogies composed around 970–92, which share a manuscript with excerpts from biblical genealogies.[15] Similarly, the opening verse of Matthew (Matt. 1:1), which, in the words of the Latin Vulgate, describes the genealogy as

13 For biblical genealogies, see Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* (New Haven, 1977); Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies: With Special Reference to the Setting of the Genealogies of Jesus*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, 1988); Walter E. Aufrecht, "Genealogy and History in Ancient Israel," in *Ascribe to the Lord: Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of Peter C. Craigie*, ed. Lyle Eslinger and Glen Taylor (Sheffield, 1988), pp. 202–35; Jeremy Punt, "Politics of Genealogies in the New Testament," *Neotestamentica* 47 (2013), 373–98.

14 *Generatio regum*, ed. Bruno Krusch, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores rerum Merovingiacrum*, vol. 7, *Passiones vitaeque sanctorum aevi Merovingici cum supplemento et appendice*, ed. B. Krusch and W. Levison (Hanover, 1920), p. 851; for this text, see Pohl, "Genealogy," pp. 243–44; Reimitz, *History*, pp. 216–17; Genicot, *Les généalogies*, pp. 15–16. For discussion of the genealogies of Jesus, see Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies*, chaps 5–7; Punt, "Politics of Genealogies," pp. 381–86.

15 T.N. Bisson, "Unheroed Pasts: History and Commemoration in South Frankland before the Albigensian Crusades," *Speculum* 65 (1990), 281–308 (at p. 294). Compare the Gascon genealogies and origin legend in the Cartulaire Noire of the cathedral church of Auch, discussed in ibid., pp. 295–96.

"Liber generationis Iesu Christi filii David filii Abraham" (The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham), clearly inspired a comparable passage in the genealogical prologue of the 12th-century biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan, king of Gwynedd in north Wales (d. 1137): "vere illud affirmetur, fuisse Griffinum Kynani, Kynanum Adae, Adam vero Dei filium" (let it be truly affirmed that Gruffudd was the son of Cynan, Cynan the son of Adam, and Adam the son of God).[16]

At the structural level, the Bible contains a plethora of genealogical origin stories that acted as direct models for their medieval counterparts. The famous 'Table of Nations' in Genesis 10, which schematizes the relations between ancient peoples by portraying the eponyms representing those peoples as descendants of Noah, gained an early medieval reflex in the so-called "Frankish Table of Nations," composed *c.*520 by an author from either the Byzantine empire or Ostrogothic Italy, which similarly schematizes the relations between the peoples of early medieval Europe by portraying those peoples as the offspring of three brothers.[17] In the *Historia Brittonum*, composed in north Wales in 829/30, the Frankish Table of Nations was explicitly connected to the biblical Table of Nations by making Alanus, the father of the three brothers, into a descendant of Japheth son of Noah through two different lines.[18] Another important example is provided by the vast and complex corpus of early medieval Irish genealogies. Donnchadh Ó Corráin has identified the key biblical model for the Irish genealogical tradition as 1 Paralipomenon 1–9. According to Ó Corráin, "This is the sole literary model for detailed two-dimensional representation of peoples, dynasties and lineages, showing segmentation, eponyms, multiple lineage and sub-lineage founders, and their descendants, over many generations."[19] The Irish genealogies compellingly demonstrate how knowl-

16 *Vita Griffini Filii Conani: The Medieval Latin Life of Gruffudd ap Cynan* §7, ed. and trans. Paul Russell (Cardiff, 2005), pp. 58–59; cf. Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, p. 12.

17 The "Frankish Table of Nations" is discussed and edited in Walter Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations: An Edition and Study," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* 17 (1983), 98–130; repr. in his *Rome's Fall and After* (London, 1989), pp. 133–65. For the dissemination of the text in the Insular world, see Patrick Wadden, "The Frankish Table of Nations in Insular Historiography," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 72 (2016), 1–31; cf. Clark, "Reading the 'First Pagan Historiographer,'" p. 218.

18 *Historia Brittonum* (Harley 3859) §§17–18, in Edmond Faral, *La légende Arthurienne: études et documents*, 3 vols (Paris, 1929), 3:15 and 17; cf. David N. Dumville, "*Historia Brittonum*: An Insular History from the Carolingian Age," in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Anton Scharer and Georg Scheibelreiter (Munich, 1994), pp. 406–34 (at pp. 409–10 and 427); Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, pp. 14 and 236–38.

19 Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "The Book of Ballymote: A Genealogical Treasure," in *Book of Ballymote*, ed. Ruairí Ó hUiginn (Dublin, 2018), pp. 1–31 (at p. 9); cf. idem, "Creating the Past,"

edge of the formal and structural conventions of a specific tradition of genealogical writing, coupled with a recognition of the pervasive influence of the Bible on the formation of those conventions, should underlie any interpretative efforts directed not only towards the genealogies themselves, but also towards the origin legends associated with the same genealogical tradition.[20]

It is useful to stay with the early Irish genealogies as we turn to examine the eschatological level of the Bible's influence on the genealogical origin legends of people groups. When one talks of 'origin legends' in a medieval context, one usually refers to *origines gentium*, the 'origins of peoples': namely, the stories that attempted to account for, or indeed actively constitute, the group consciousness and solidarity of an ethnic community.[21] It has been suggested that, in the early Middle Ages, belief in a common origin and a generalized sense of kinship was one of the most significant characteristics of ethnic group identity.[22] It was inevitable that origin legends should bear a significant genealogical component, since it was expected that they should relate the formative deeds of the putative common ancestors of the ethnic group. The deeds of those ancestors could be viewed in direct relation to the present through the pedigree of a ruling lineage, which could precisely enumerate the number of generations that had elapsed between the common ancestors and contemporary rulers. Susan Reynolds has observed that "some medieval writers do not seem to have distinguished the tracing of a king's genealogy from recounting the descent of his subjects."[23] In Ireland, however, it would not have sufficed to represent the history of the ethnic group through a single ruling lineage, because early medieval Ireland was divided between many kingdoms and power was articulated within an elaborate hierarchy of kingship.[24] Instead, it was deemed necessary to arrange the pedigrees of many ruling lineages within vast genealogical collections.[25]

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p. 206; idem, "The Church and Secular Society," in *L'irlanda e gli irlandesi nell'alto medioevo: Spoleto, 16–21 aprile 2009* (Spoleto, 2010), pp. 261–321 (at p. 280).

20 For the structural conventions of the early Irish genealogies, see Ó Corráin, "The Book of Ballymote," pp. 10–12; for a comparison between the structural conventions of Irish, English, and Welsh genealogies, see Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, pp. 20–31.

21 See especially Susan Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm," *History* 68 (1983), 375–90.

22 Walter Pohl, "Introduction—Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile," in *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Walter Pohl and Gerda Heydemann (Turnhout, 2013), pp. 1–64 (at p. 25).

23 Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium*," p. 390.

24 Francis John Byrne, *Irish Kings and High-Kings*, 2nd ed. (Dublin, 2001), chap. 3.

25 See, for example, the genealogies in the two earliest surviving manuscript collections, edited in *Corpus genealogiarum Hiberniae*, vol. 1, ed. M.A. O'Brien (Dublin, 1962; repr. with introduction by J.V. Kelleher, 1976, 2001, 2005).

An eschatological imperative was introduced to genealogy when the idea that the ethnic group shared a common genealogical origin came into contact with the biblical notion that all of humanity descended from the sons of Noah, as described in the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. In order for an ethnic group to locate itself within the history of salvation, it was necessary to understand how the group's common ancestors were related to the patriarchs. Irish scholars undertook this challenge with particular vigour. Between the 7th and 11th centuries, an elaborate genealogical origin legend was developed that recounted the ancient settlements of Ireland, culminating with the settlement of Míl Espáine, the common ancestor of the Irish.[26] The apex of this process was the famous *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, the "Book of the Taking of Ireland," created around the middle of the 11th century but surviving in several differing recensions.[27] Alongside the pseudo-history, a pedigree was established to demonstrate that Míl Espáine was descended from Japheth son of Noah, thereby locating the Irish decisively within the broader scheme of biblical history.[28] The main corpus of Irish genealogies, meanwhile, endeavoured to show how the many royal dynasties of early medieval Ireland were descended from Míl's three sons, and thus how the present was merely an extension of the same eschatological scheme. The 'prehistoric' relationships between the dynasties were contrived so as to foreshadow later political circumstances. Overall, Irish history was rendered as an elaborate teleology showing how the present day was the inevitable outcome of a divine plan initiated by the Flood.

It must be said that the Irish origin legend far exceeds all other origin legends of peoples surviving from medieval Europe in terms of scope, detail, and precision. It represents the summit achievement rather than the standard type.

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26 The evolution of the origin legend is summarized in John Carey, *The Irish National Origin-Legend: Synthetic Pseudo-History*, Quiggin Pamphlets on the Sources of Mediaeval Gaelic History 1 (Cambridge, 1994); idem, "Lebor Gabála and the Legendary History of Ireland," in *Medieval Celtic Literature and Society*, ed. Helen Fulton (Dublin, 2005), pp. 32–48; and Ó Corráin, "The Church and Secular Society," pp. 266–78.

27 The recensions are confusingly edited and translated together in *Lebor Gabála Érenn: The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, ed. R.A.S. Macalister, Irish Texts Society 34–35, 39, 41, and 44, 5 vols (Dublin, 1938–56). For essential discussion of the text, see R. Mark Scowcroft, "Leabhar Gabhála Part I: The Growth of the Text," *Ériu* 38 (1987), 81–142 and idem, "Leabhar Gabhála Part II: The Growth of the Tradition," *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66; for the historiographical background, see John Carey, *A New Introduction to "Lebor Gabála Érenn": The Book of the Taking of Ireland, Edited and Translated by R. A. Stewart Macalister, D.Litt.*, Irish Texts Society (London, 1993).

28 The pedigree's development is discussed in detail by John Carey, "The Ancestry of Fénius Farsaid," *Celtica* 21 (1990), 104–12 and Bart Jaski, "'We are of the Greeks in our Origin': New Perspectives on the Irish Origin Legend," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 46 (2003), 1–53.

Elsewhere in Europe, the same factors were at work to encourage the belief that the apical ancestors of the ethnic group were descended from Noah and thus a part of biblical history, but in no other instance was the story worked out in such exacting detail. Among the Britons, the ethnonym 'Britto' or 'Brutus' had been traced back to Japheth son of Noah by the time of the *Historia Brittonum* in 829/30, partly with the help of the Irish pedigree of Míl Espáine, and other pedigrees were developed between the 9th and 12th centuries to show the descent of Brittonic royal dynasties from Britto/Brutus.[29] In Anglo-Saxon England, most ruling dynasties were traced back to Woden, whom Bede calls the *stirps* ('stem, stock') of English royalty, and by Alfred's reign in the 9th century the ruling dynasty of the West Saxons had been traced back through Woden to Noah, though it is not clear in this case whether the wider ethnic group was directly implicated in the descent.[30] Even less precision was attempted in Francia, where, by the time that the Fredegar chronicle was assembled in the early 660s, the Merovingian dynasty was vaguely considered to descend from an early leader of the ethnic group called Francio, and the group itself was vaguely connected to world history through the idea that the Franks were an offshoot of the Trojans.[31] By the time that the *Liber historiae Francorum* was completed in 726/27, the eponym of the Merovingian dynasty, Merovech, had been rendered as a descendant of Priam of Troy through a specific line of descent.[32] But Frankish historiography seems not to have found a way to connect the Trojan line of Priam with Noah. The *Historia Brittonum* did so by making Dardanus a son of Elisa son of Javan, contradicting the standard account that Dardanus was son of Zeus/Jupiter. It was not until the 12th century that more satisfactory lines of descent were worked out. This was achieved through variant routes by Godfrey of Viterbo in his *Pantheon*, which reached its final

29 Peter C. Bartrum, "Was there a British 'Book of Conquests'?," *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies* 23 (1968–70), 1–6; Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, pp. 235–40.

30 For Woden, see Eric John, "The Point of Woden," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 5 (1992), 127–34. For the extension of the genealogy to Noah, see Thomas D. Hill, "The Myth of the Ark-Born Son of Noah and the West Saxon Royal Genealogical Tables," *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987), 379–83, and Daniel Anlezark, "Sceaf, Japheth and the Origins of the Anglo-Saxons," *Anglo-Saxon England* 31 (2001), 13–46.

31 Reimitz, *History*, pp. 166–72; Hummer, *Visions of Kinship*, p. 284. For the background of the Trojan origin legend of the Franks, see Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47–57 (pp. 50–53); Matthew Innes, "Teutons or Trojans? The Carolingians and the Germanic Past," in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Yitzhak Hen and Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 227–49 (at pp. 248–49).

32 Reimitz, *History*, pp. 240–44; Hummer, *Visions of Kinship*, p. 284.

form around 1190, and, more influentially, by an anonymous Welsh genealogist, whose work first surfaces in the genealogical prologue of the biography of Gruffudd ap Cynan, written between 1137 and 1170.[33]

Another type of genealogical origin legend sought to depict the coherence of social groups. As with *origines gentium*, genealogies were used in this type of composition to portray the perceived interrelationships between multiple lineages, and to emphasize the supposed prominence of one or more lineages within the group. This can be illustrated by three examples from different corners of medieval Europe. First, and perhaps most remarkable, is the Icelandic *Landnámabók*.[34] This is a large collection of genealogical origin legends purporting to explain who the first holders of land in Iceland were. The text contains much genealogical information pertaining to these settlers, encompassing both their ancestors, who lived prior to the settlement of Iceland, and their Icelandic descendants. The original text is thought to have been written between about 1097 and 1125, although it survives only in three redactions of the late 13th and early 14th centuries. Each later redaction contains additional genealogies designed to show how the compilers of the redactions were descended from the original settlers; for example, *Sturlubók*, the version by Sturla Þórðarson (1214–84) completed around 1275–80, traces the descent of the Sturlungar family from 11 of the first settlers.[35]

Although the purpose of the original text is disputed, it is at least clear that *Landnámabók* sought to emphasize the rights of the Icelandic landholding class to the land of Iceland, rights that were alleged to derive from the original settlement of the island. The self-consciousness of this group and the importance of genealogy as a force that bound the group together are emphasized in

33 Godfrey of Viterbo, *Pantheon* particula 32, ed. G. Waitz, in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Scriptores*, vol. 22, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hannover, 1872), p. 300; cf. Loren J. Weber, "The Historical Importance of Godfrey of Viterbo," *Viator* 25 (1994), 153–95 (at pp. 186–89). *Vita Griffini Filii Conani* §4, ed. Russell, pp. 52–55. For the influence of this Welsh pedigree on later genealogical writing in Wales, England, and Iceland, see Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, pp. 240–56.

34 *Íslendingabók; Landnámabók*, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit 1 (Reykjavík, 1968); *The Book of Settlements: Landnámabók*, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards (Winnipeg, 1972; repr. 2006); for an introduction to the text, see Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "*Landnámabók* and its *Sturlubók* Version," in *Sturla Þórðarson: Skald, Chieftain and Lawman*, ed. Jón Viðar Sigurðsson and Sverrir Jakobsson (Leiden, 2017), pp. 44–55.

35 Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "*Landnámabók*," p. 48; for example, *Landnámabók* (S) §41, ed. Jakob Benediktsson, pp. 77–78, trans. Hermann Pálsson and Edwards, p. 31. For the genealogies favourable to the Sturlungar in *Sturlunga saga*, which were probably compiled by Sturla Þórðarson originally, see Úlfar Bragason, "The Politics of Genealogies in *Sturlunga saga*," in *Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence*, ed. Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (Turnhout, 2004), pp. 309–21.

a passage preserved in the *Melabók* version of *Landnámabók*, which probably stems from the original text:[36]

> People often say that writing about the Settlements is irrelevant to learning, but we think we can better meet the criticism of foreigners when they accuse us of being descended from slaves or scoundrels, if we know for certain the truth about our ancestry. And for those who want to know ancient lore and how to trace genealogies, it's better to start at the beginning than to come in at the middle. Anyway, all civilised nations want to know about the origins of their own society and the beginnings of their own race.

The emphasis on genealogy is thus in part intended as a response to foreigners who would doubt the status of the ancestors of contemporary Icelandic families.[37] Genealogy not only served to bind the families together, but more importantly, in this case, it served to connect the landholders of the present, as a group, to their preferred past.

Moving southwards, a second example is found in medieval Wales. During the reign of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, prince of Gwynedd (*c.*1200–40), and arguably between 1216 and *c.*1223, a sizable corpus of genealogies was assembled that reflected Llywelyn's hegemony over native Wales.[38] A substantial part of this corpus concerns the aristocracy of Gwynedd, whose genealogies are arranged in such a way as to represent the contemporary pattern of landholding. The aristocracy was perceived as a coherent group whose interrelationships could be schematized genealogically. Fullest attention is devoted to the family called *llwyth Cillin*, which included the person under whose influence the genealogies were compiled, namely the poet and courtier Einion ap Gwalchmai (fl. *c.*1217–23). *Llwyth Cillin* held land primarily in the west of the island of Anglesey, and so it is no surprise that the genealogies are prefaced by an origin legend claiming that the family's legendary ancestor, Meilyr Meilyrion, had helped his cousin, Cadwallon Lawhir, king of Gwynedd, expel the Irish from

36 *Landnámabók*, trans. Hermann Þálsson and Edwards, p. 6; cf. Sveinbjörn Rafnsson, "*Landnámabók*," p. 46.

37 Further instances of such doubts are discussed in Torfi H. Tulinius, "The *Matter of the North*: Fiction and Uncertain Identities in Thirteenth-Century Iceland," in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 242–65 (at pp. 257–58).

38 The text is discussed and edited in Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, chap. 4 and appendix B.4. For earlier work on these genealogies, see *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*, ed. Peter C. Bartrum (Cardiff, 1966), pp. 75–120 and 147–58.

Anglesey, putatively in the early 6th century.[39] Although *llwyth Cillin* and the rest of the aristocracy of medieval Gwynedd could not claim to have colonized virgin soil, as the landholding families of Iceland could, they could nevertheless identify historical moments that were capable of endowing them with the required status and legitimacy, and they connected themselves to those legitimizing historical moments through genealogy.

The third example leads us much further southwards and eastwards. From the Latin Crusader kingdoms there survives a genealogical compilation called *Lignages d'Outremer*. The first redaction of the *Lignages* was composed between 1268 and 1270 as an appendage to the *Livre de Jean d'Ibelin*, a corpus of feudal jurisprudence within the *Assises de Jérusalem*.[40] The primary purpose of this version of the text is to trace the many branches of the Ibelin family, though it proceeds to describe all the important lineages of the Latin East, explaining their roles in establishing the Crusader states. The text was continued and enlarged in 1305–06 and incorporated into a new redaction of the *Livre de Jean d'Ibelin* in 1369. This latter version was reorganized so as to present a more methodical survey of the aristocratic families of the Latin East, from highest to lowest status, without privileging the Ibelin family. The principal factor governing the selection of families for inclusion in this revised version was their role in the establishment of the Crusader states up to the beginning of the 13th century. Thus, the *Lignages d'Outremer* became, in effect, a genealogical origin story and history of the aristocracy of the Latin East. It represented one view of the hierarchy of precedence among those lineages, conditioned by their role in establishing the eastern states.

Genealogical origin legends concerning individual dynasties abounded during the medieval period. Their forms varied widely, and their genealogical components may or may not have belonged to an established tradition of genealogical literature, such as those listed above. Two of the key elements of such origin stories are (1) the source of legitimacy that they establish for the dynasty, and (2) the line of continuity that they trace to the present day. These elements were carefully selected to fulfil contemporary expectations and could be altered as circumstances required; there was no single objective 'origin' for a dynasty.

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39 The story is based on the famous Cunedda origin legend, on which see Guy, *Medieval Welsh Genealogy*, pp. 72–76.

40 *Lignages d'Outremer*, ed. Marie-Adélaïde Nielen (Paris, 2003); for consideration of the form of the genealogies, see Godfried Croenen, "Princely and Noble Genealogies, Twelfth to Fourteenth Century: Form and Function," in *The Medieval Chronicle: Proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Medieval Chronicle; Driebergen/Utrecht 13–16 July 1996*, ed. Erik Kooper (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 84–95 (at pp. 88–89).

Just as Icelandic families identified the settlement of Iceland as their point of origin, and Welsh families identified the expulsion of the Irish from Wales as theirs, northern French comital dynasties of the late 11th and 12th centuries looked back to the viking invasions of Francia in the late 9th and early 10th centuries as their definitive time of dynastic beginnings. This period had many advantages as a locus for origins: the defence of the land against the pagan vikings was as just a source of dynastic legitimacy as one could hope for; Carolingian emperors could be adopted as dynastic patrons, circumventing the need to admit subservience to Capetian kings; and a literary model was available in the form of Dudo of Saint-Quentin's *Historia Normannorum*.[41] Well-known examples of genealogical origin stories incorporating these elements were written for and even by the counts of Anjou. Beginning in 1096, Fulk IV le Réchin, count of Anjou, composed a genealogical history of his family, possibly for the instruction of his sons, intended to reveal how his ancestors had acquired and retained their honour and how he himself had held the same honour.[42] Fulk knew very little about his earliest ancestors beyond their names, but he does relate that they rescued the honour of Anjou from the pagan vikings and defended it from Christian counts, and that the earliest named ancestor, Ingelgarius, had received the honour from the emperor Charles the Bald, son of Louis the Pious and grandson of Charlemagne.[43] Here are the bare bones of a dynastic origin legend, which sufficed for Fulk to explain the origins of his family's power.

Yet no more than a decade later, circumstances had changed, and one finds a revised origin legend surfacing in the sources. Nicholas Paul has argued that the earliest version of the *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum* was composed between the death of Geoffrey IV Martel, eldest son and heir of Fulk IV, in 1106, and the death of Fulk IV himself in 1109, which was followed by the succession of Fulk IV's younger son, Fulk V.[44] The *Chronica*'s author was highly critical of Fulk IV and insinuated that he may have had a hand in the death of his eldest son Geoffrey. The same view may have informed the reworking

41 Cf. Dunbabin, "Discovering a Past," p. 5.

42 *Fragmentum historiae Andegavensis*, in *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. Louis Halphen and René Poupardin (Paris, 1913), pp. 232–38; see Nicholas L. Paul, "The Chronicle of Fulk le Réchin: A Reassessment," *Haskins Society Journal* 18 (2007), 19–35.

43 *Fragmentum historiae Andegavensis*, pp. 232–33.

44 Nicholas L. Paul, "*Origo consulum*: Rumours of Murder, a Crisis of Lordship, and the Legendary Origins of the Counts of Anjou," *French History* 29 (2015), 139–60. For the text, see *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum*, in *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou*, ed. Halphen and Poupardin, pp. 25–73.

of the dynasty's origin legend. Among the earliest generations of the dynasty, reference is made to two additional ancestors who were apparently entirely unknown to Fulk IV himself: Ingelgarius's father Tertullus, and the latter's father Tarquatius. In this version, Tarquatius is a mere peasant or forester of disputed origin, whereas his son Tertullus, not satisfied with his meagre inheritance, embarked on a dazzling career in the service of Charles the Bald and effectively established the power of the dynasty.[45] Paul has pointed out that the name Tarquatius was probably borrowed from Sallust's *Catiline Conspiracy*, the *Chronica*'s most important stylistic model, where Titus Manlius Torquatus is invoked as someone who unjustly executed his own gallant son. It is possible, therefore, to understand the *Chronica*'s Tarquatius as a prototype of Fulk IV, and the *Chronica*'s Tertullus as a suitable model for Fulk IV's younger son and heir, Fulk V. The intervening genealogy was essential for the meaning of the origin legend, for the *Chronica*'s concluding passage explicitly states that the deeds of the dynasty's ancestors should be used for the instruction of their descendants.[46]

Although origin legends and genealogies of ruling dynasties were pervasive during the Middle Ages, they are sometimes found embedded in contexts where the dynasties themselves are not the primary objects of attention. Many texts co-opt dynastic genealogies for a subtly different purpose: to explain the origins and development of the political institutions with which those dynasties were associated. Thus, from the late 13th century, genealogical writings purportedly concerning the Welfish dynasty, who from 1235 ruled the duchy of Brunswick-Lüneburg in Saxony, concentrate exclusively on the connections of the Welfs with earlier Saxon dynasties through marriage, rather than the Welfs' own agnatic ancestors from Bavaria.[47] The real purpose of such writings was to explain the origins and continuity of ducal power in Saxony, a purpose achieved through selective representation of aristocratic genealogies. This is not to say that such 'institutional' genealogies were not in the Welfish interest, since it would clearly have been advantageous for them to stress their Saxon background; but we should be aware that genealogies could serve different purposes in relation to different kinds of origin legend.

45 *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum*, pp. 26–29.

46 *Chronica de gestis consulum Andegavorum*, pp. 67 and 73 n. a; cf. Paul, "*Origo Consulsum*," pp. 144–45.

47 Bernd Schneidmüller, "Constructing the Past by Means of the Present: Historiographical Foundations of Medieval Institutions, Dynasties, Peoples, and Communities," in *Medieval Concepts of the Past: Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, ed. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, and Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 167–92 (at pp. 178–80).

The late medieval diagrammatic genealogical histories of England were a particularly popular form of institutional genealogy. Their format, consisting of a diagrammatic family tree of connected roundels accompanied by explanatory text, had been developed by Peter of Poitiers, chancellor of the University of Paris from 1193 to 1205, in his *Compendium historiae in genealogia Christi*.[48] The *Compendium* is a summary of biblical history based on Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* and accompanied by a pictorial representation of the genealogy of Christ, and was composed for didactic purposes. Since the progression of history was manifested in the downwards movement of the diagram, the format was better suited to rolls rather than codices.[49] Peter of Poitiers's *Compendium* proved extremely popular and formed the basis for adaptations that expanded the scope of the work to national and even universal history.[50] In England, the format of the *Compendium* was adopted to represent the lineage of the kings of England by Matthew Paris.[51] This led to the creation and proliferation, during the late 13th and early 14th centuries, of an interrelated group of genealogical histories in roll format that recounted the history of the kings of England alongside a genealogical diagram.[52] The key principle of these genealogical histories is that the kingdom of England had maintained a continuous institutional existence since the reign of Ecgberht early in the 9th century, despite several dynastic changes. One way in which these latter were overcome was the inclusion of a line of descent from the West Saxon dynasty to the Angevin kings through Henry I's wife, Matilda, the daughter of St Margaret of Scotland and therefore granddaughter of Edward the Exile.[53]

48 For this work, see Philip S. Moore, *The Works of Peter of Poitiers, Master in Theology and Chancellor of Paris (1193–1205)* (Notre Dame, IN, 1936), chap. 4; Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres*, pp. 121–46.

49 For an early example in roll format, probably created at Canterbury around 1220, see William H. Monroe, "A Roll-Manuscript of Peter of Poitiers' Compendium," *The Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 65 (1978), 92–107. For further English copies, see Stella Panayotova, "Peter of Poitiers's *Compendium in genealogia Christi*: The Early English Copies," in *Belief and Culture in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to Henry Mayr-Harting*, ed. Richard Gameson and Henrietta Leyser (Oxford, 2001), pp. 327–41.

50 For the universal histories, see François Fossier, "Chroniques universelles en forme de rouleau à la fin du Moyen Age," *Bulletin de la société nationale des antiquaries de France* (1980–81 [1982]), 163–83; Klapisch-Zuber, *L'ombre des ancêtres*, pp. 139–57; Norbye, "Genealogies in Medieval France," pp. 86–89.

51 Laborderie, *Histoire, mémoire et pouvoir*, pp. 81–144; idem, "*Genealogiae orbiculatae*: Matthew Paris and the Invention of Visual Abstracts of English History," in *Thirteenth Century England*, vol. 14, *Proceedings of the Aberystwyth and Lampeter Conference, 2011*, ed. Janet Burton, Phillipp Schofield, and Björn Weiler (Woodbridge, 2013), pp. 183–201.

52 See above, n. 9.

53 Laborderie, *Histoire, mémoire et pouvoir*, pp. 271–79; idem, "New Pattern," pp. 54–56.

This served to demonstrate an element of genealogical continuity between two of the most significant dynasties to rule England. By contrast, the agnatic descent of the Angevins from the counts of Anjou, whose own genealogical origin legends were examined above, was marginalized, since it was irrelevant for the institutional continuity of England. The same theme underlies a further group of genealogical rolls in which the history of the kingdom was projected back as far as Brutus by incorporating Geoffrey of Monmouth's kings, thereby deliberately blurring any distinction between 'Britain' and 'England.'[54] Even in these cases, where there was no strictly *genealogical* link between the kings of Britain and the kings of England, it was the continuity of the *kingdom*, as represented by successive dynasties ruling over what was perceived to be a single territory and 'nation,' that remained the dominant ideology.[55] The generational history of the successive dynasties had come to symbolize the passage of the kingdom through time.

The examples above suggest that the genealogical elements of origin legends could serve many purposes: they could locate a people group within the history of salvation, define the status and legitimacy of a social group, instruct a prince through ancestral models of behaviour, and fashion a national history that could overcome dynastic discontinuity. In every case, genealogy achieved these purposes by situating accounts of origins in historical time, and by demonstrating the connections between those origins and the present day. But genealogy was not merely a chronological bridge. It was itself a powerful and culturally redolent device for explaining the structures, evolution, and above all origins of medieval society in its own terms. A genealogy *was* an account of origins, in quite a literal sense.

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54 Jaclyn Rajsic, "Looking for Arthur in Short Histories and Genealogies of England's Kings," *The Review of English Studies*, n.s. 68, no. 285 (2017), 448–70 (at pp. 466–67).

55 Laborderie, *Histoire, mémoire et pouvoir*, pp. 397–404; idem, "New Pattern," pp. 57–60.

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CHAPTER 16

Myths of the Eastern Origins of the Franks: Fictions or a Kind of Truth?

John D. Niles

There are two things to be said about origin myths. First of all, stories that are generally so fantastical as these cannot possibly be true in a literal sense. Second, there must be some truth-elements in these culturally central tales; otherwise what would be the point in telling them? The problem to be addressed, then, is "How can the truth-value of an origin myth be sifted out from the manifest untruths in which the story is clothed?"[1]

The present paper ventures some suggestions as to how one of the leading origin myths pertaining to the Age of Migrations of the peoples of north-west Europe (*c.*350–650 C.E.) can plausibly be construed—not literally, but still faithfully—in the light of reason and the historical and archaeological record, as opposed to being dismissed as "a farrago of nonsense," as it often is.[2] The myth that is my topic tells of the origins of the Franks, a group whose importance in the historical records of early medieval Europe is second to none and whose formative influence on neighbouring peoples, including the Anglo-Saxons, was substantial.[3]

1 Perspectives on the truth-value of origin myths and related stories are offered by the contributors to *Sacred Narrative: Readings in the Theory of Myth*, ed. Alan Dundes (Berkeley, 1984) and by myself in "True Stories and Other Lies," in *Myth in Early Northwest Europe*, ed. Stephen O. Glosecki (Tempe, 2007), pp. 1–30.

2 Quotation from Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks: Frankish Origins in Early Medieval Historiography," in *Concepts of National Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. Simon Forde, Lesley Johnson, and Alan V. Murray (Leeds, 1995), pp. 47–57 (at p. 50), here speaking of the *Chronicle of Fredegar* in particular.

3 Although the present paper is meant to stand alone, those who wish can read it as one of a triptych of essays of mine that put pressure on the category of the Germanic. See also "Hawks, Horses, and Huns: The Impact of Peoples of the Steppe on the Folk Cultures of Northern Europe," *Western Folklore* 75 (2016), 133–64; and "Reassessing Anglo-Saxon Origins from a Eurasian Perspective," in *Global Perspectives on Early Medieval England*, ed. Karen Louise Jolly and Britton Brooks (Cambridge, 2022), pp. 139–70. Arguing that certain features of the elite Migration Age cultures of north-west Europe have broadly Eurasian antecedents, not just Germanic or Roman ones, these essays draw attention to archaeological evidence that points toward the Hunnic empire—the great northern alternative to Rome—as a nexus through which, for a time, these eastern influences were felt.

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The myth of Frankish origins is actually threefold in nature, for three separate quasi-historical accounts dating from the late 6th century to the early 8th century tell of that people's origins and early history. The earliest of these is (1) the account given by Gregory of Tours in Book II of his *Historia Francorum*, completed by 594. The others are (2) the *Chronicle* (or *Chronicles*) *of Fredegar*, completed in the year 659 or thereabouts though consisting of two versions written earlier in that century, and (3) the anonymous *Liber historiae Francorum*, dating from about 727. These two later histories are thought to be indebted to traditions either unknown to Gregory of Tours or suppressed by him in the interest of his own shaping of the story. When read side by side, these sources contribute much to our understanding of this historical period by showing what early Frankish historians *thought* the origins of their people to have been, even if their thinking was of a mythopoeic kind.[4]

While these three narratives differ from one another in obvious ways, and while their authors wrote retrospectively and, to some extent, from the perspective of outsiders, they have a common thread. This is that the Franks came from one or another eastern region before arriving at their permanent home in the Rhineland. Pannonia, the Danubian basin, the north shore of the Black Sea, and ancient Troy are among the regions named in relation to the Franks' prior history. Improbable as these claims may seem at first glance, they ought to inspire curiosity as regards the importance, in the medieval imagination and perhaps to some degree in actual fact, of Eurasian groups and regions that are rarely taken into account in modern discussions of the origins of the Western nations.

I should perhaps make clear that my topic is not the same as the myth of Trojan origins that was expounded by Western writers from the time of Virgil to that of Geoffrey of Monmouth and well beyond, finding expression in the visual arts as well as through historical fictions in both verse and prose. As is discussed by Michael Clarke and Helen Fulton in their contributions to the present volume, the Trojan myth has been used to foster claims about the worth and dignity of more than a few western European peoples. Instead, I wish to stimulate thought concerning some of the quintessential barbarians of the ancient world: Huns, Alans, Sarmatians, and other members of the Empire of the Huns, the great confederacy that reached its apogee of power at the time of the death of Attila in 453 C.E. Modern historians have tended to pass over without comment the possible relation of these peoples of the steppes to the

4 It is beside my purpose to engage more than peripherally with the voluminous body of scholarship devoted to these historical sources and their interpretation. Readers can readily orient themselves to this research via Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge, 2015), especially chapters 1–3 and 7–9.

geographical details provided by Gregory and other Frankish historians, focusing attention instead on the bold claim of Trojan origins, which is justifiably viewed as a fiction. Advances in Migration Age archaeology, however, encourage a different view, one that focuses on real-world interactions among peoples of the Eurasian landmass rather than on Priam's shining city of gold.

1 Gregory of Tours

After rehearsing prior accounts of Gallic military and political events of the 4th and 5th centuries C.E., Gregory summarizes as follows what he has learned from earlier sources regarding the Franks' arrival in the Rhineland:[5]

> Now many say that the Franks left Pannonia and at first inhabited the banks of the river Rhine. From there they crossed the Rhine and traversed Thoringia; and then they set over themselves in the territories and cities long-haired kings, from their first, and as I would say, more noble, family … We read in the consular annals that Theudomer, king of the Franks, the son of Richimer, and his mother Ascyla, were put to the sword.
>
> It is said also that Chlodio, skilled in war and the most noble among his people, was king of the Franks at the time; he lived in the fortress of Dispargum, which is in the region of the Thoringi … Some say that king Merovech, whose son was Childeric, was of his line.
>
> The Franks of that time, however, paid service to pagan religion and were entirely without knowledge of God.

Most of the remainder of Gregory's Book II tells of the reign of Childeric's son Clovis, whom Gregory celebrates above all for converting his people to Christianity. My concern here, though, is with Childeric, Clovis's pagan father. We learn more about Childeric in Book II, chapters 12, 18, and 19, where Gregory tells how Childeric lived for eight years at the court of Bisinus, king of the Thuringians, after having been driven out from his Frankish homeland for his immorality in violating the daughters of the Franks. After this period of exile, Childeric was restored to his kingship in the land of the Franks. He returned

5 Quoted from Gregory of Tours, *Historia Francorum* 2.9, trans. Alexander Callander Murray in his edition *Gregory of Tours: The Merovingians* (Peterborough, ON, 2006), p. 4. Murray's translation is based in turn on Gregory's *Libri historiarum x* as edited by Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 1.1, 2nd ed. (Hanover, 1951), pp. 57–59.

to Gaul accompanied by Basina, Bisinus's queen, who left her husband so as become Childeric's queen. Basina subsequently gave birth to Clovis.

Gregory's account of Childeric's reign is so opaque at points as to lead to uncertainty as to who did what, when, to whom, in alliance with whom. One detail that is clear, however, is that Childeric fought a battle at Orléans fairly early in his reign. To judge from external evidence, he did so in 463 C.E. as an ally of Rome when Roman forces were opposed by Goths of southern Gaul.[6] Subsequent to this event, Childeric is said to have won a victory at Angers, fighting either along with or against the great warlord and statesman Odoacer (*c.*433–93), who by that time was ruling over Italy from his capital city of Ravenna. Childeric later entered into a treaty with Odoacer, and their allied armies subdued the Alamanni, who had invaded parts of northern Italy. Although Gregory gives no dates for these events, they must have transpired in the 460s and 470s. Gregory mentions Childeric's death but ascribes no date to it. From other sources this event can be ascribed to *c.*481 C.E.

Can archaeological evidence help to sift out the truth-value of this narrative? The answer, I think, is "yes, surely so."

Two factors with a bearing on this question emerge clearly from the archaeological record, although Gregory makes no mention of them. The first of these is the straightforward observation that at the time of his death, Childeric was fabulously wealthy. The furnishings of his tomb in Tournai, in what is now Belgium, as that tomb was first excavated in 1653 and as the whole site was examined in a more scientific manner in 1983–86, make this abundantly clear.[7] The tomb is the most exquisitely furnished one of its historical period that has been discovered in any of the Western countries, being rivalled in this regard only by Sutton Hoo.[8] Childeric had probably accrued his wealth from multiple sources including his princely birth; his alliance with the Thuringi through his marriage to Basina; and his service to Rome, both during the Roman/Gothic wars of the 460s and subsequently, when Odoacer ruled over much of Italy. Childeric's wealth at the time of his death would have included any loot, tribute, or

6 Edward James, *The Franks* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 64–65.

7 James, *The Franks*, pp. 58–64; Patrick Périn and Michel Kazanski, "Das Grab Childerichs I," in *Die Franken: Wegbereiter Europas*, ed. Alfried Wieczorek et al. (Mannheim, 1996), pp. 173–82; *Das Gold der Barbarenfürsten: Schätze aus Prunkgräbern des 5. Jahrhunderts n. chr. zwischen Kaukasus und Gallien*, ed. Alfried Wieczorek and Patrick Périn (Stuttgart, 2001), pp. 172–73 and 63, 64, 76, 77; and Cécille Colonna, "The Tomb of Childeric," in *Rome and the Barbarians: The Birth of a New World*, ed. Jean-Jacques Aillagon (Milan, 2008), pp. 346–47.

8 Rupert Bruce-Mitford, "A Comparison between the Sutton Hoo Burial Deposit and Childeric's Treasure," in *Actes du Colloque international d'archéologie, Rouen, 3–4–5 Juillet 1975*, vol. 3, *La période Mérovingienne* (Rouen, 1978), pp. 366–73.

diplomatic gifts he had acquired (and still retained) as a result of his victories over the Goths of southern Gaul and the Alamanni of the upper Rhine.

Since Childeric was a pagan king, Gregory minimizes his stature and accomplishments, reserving his praise for that king's son, Clovis, who converted the Franks. This may be one reason—simple ignorance of the matter is another possibility—why Gregory says nothing about Childeric's wealth as was displayed so conspicuously at his funeral. Moreover, one must wonder if Gregory wanted to depict Childeric in a negative light when he states (in Book II, chapter 12) that Childeric, when a young ruler over the Franks, was driven out by his people because of his predatory sexual habits. Regardless of what truth underlies that observation, other information in these same chapters encourages the inference that Childeric spent eight years in Thuringia because he had strong connections there already. As we have seen, one of his predecessors on the Frankish throne, Chlodio, "lived in the fortress of Dispargum, which is in the region of Thuringia" (Book II, chapter 9). Childeric may thus have had a prior claim to authority in Thuringia, not just in the Frankish territories that lay to the west of the Rhine. In any event, his marriage to Basina joined these two peoples in an alliance. Although Gregory condemns Childeric's moral failures and speaks of his forced exile, these same pages of the *Historia Francorum* convey an image of a bold leader successfully asserting authority over two neighbouring kingdoms that he might have thought of as his to win as his own.

The second of the archaeological factors that deserve attention is the character and quality of the furnishings that accompanied Childeric to the grave. The excavations undertaken at Tournai in the 1980s revealed this site to have been a chamber grave, richly furnished with weapons and other accessories and covered by a great earthen barrow, one that is now no longer extant. Chamber-and-barrow graves of this type had long been in fashion among the elites of the steppes of Central Asia before being introduced in the West, first in the Danubian basin that was the heartland of Attila's empire and then in north-west Europe, including select sites in Scandinavia and Britain.[9] A funerary display of this character points to Childeric's having had close relations not just with

9 Robert Van de Noort, "The Context of Early Medieval Barrows," *Antiquity* 67 (1993), 66–73, and, with important treatment of Eastern European and Central Asian sites, Michal Lutovsky, "Between Sutton Hoo and Chernaya Mogila: Barrows in Eastern and Western Early Medieval Europe," *Antiquity* 70 (1996), 671–76. See also P.P. Tolochko and S.V. Polin, "Burial Mounds of the Scythian Aristocracy in the Northern Black Sea Area," in *Scythian Gold: Treasures from Ancient Ukraine*, ed. Ellen D. Reeder (New York, 1999), pp. 83–91. A valuable comparative analysis, now dated in some respects, is by Leslie Webster, "Death's Diplomacy: Sutton Hoo in the Light of Other Male Princely Burials," in *Sutton Hoo: Fifty Years After*, ed. Robert Farrell and Carol Neuman de Vegvar (Oxford, OH, 1992), pp. 75–81.

Roman military forces in Gaul, but also with members (or former members) of the Hunnic confederacy. One wonders if Childeric's widow Basina had a role in these eastern connections, for it was very likely she who determined the funeral arrangements, along with her elite Thuringian and Frankish followers and her still-young son Clovis. In any event, Childeric's style of interment is radically eastern in conception. For a prominent Roman of the imperial period to be interred in this same manner would have been unthinkable.[10]

A related feature of Childeric's gravesite is the practice of horse sacrifice. A single horse, evidently adorned with magnificent trappings, was interred close by the king's body, while no fewer than 21 additional horses were buried in three groups near the barrow's perimeter.[11] While horse burial in conjunction with richly furnished chamber graves is well attested on the Eurasian steppes, and while this same practice had come to be practised here and there in eastern parts of Europe including the Danubian basin and Thuringia, it is not attested before this time in the archaeological record of peoples dwelling west of the Rhine.[12]

Another factor suggestive of eastern influences at Childeric's court is the character of the metalwork that adorned the bodies of the king and his horse. In addition to a gold cruciform brooch that has attracted attention as an emblem of Roman authority, these furnishings included an impressive number of gold-and-garnet cloisonné ornaments of a kind that was just then coming into vogue in Migration Age Europe. These represent a development of an earlier type of polychrome jewellery produced in the Danubian basin and the northern Pontic region. Beginning with Childeric's grave and several other high-end burial sites in

10 My perspective on the evidence pertaining to Childeric's tomb departs from that of Bonnie Effros, who in her book *Merovingian Mortuary Archaeology and the Making of the Early Middle Ages* (Berkeley, 2003) concludes that when read in the context of its larger gravefield, "Childeric's grave represents a testament to continuity" in the Frankish archaeological record; quotation from her chapter "Grave Goods and the Ritual Expression of Identity," as reproduced in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. Thomas F.X. Noble (London, 2006), pp. 189–232 (at p. 192).

11 James, *The Franks*, pp. 62–64; Raymond Broulet, "Tournai und der Bestattungsplatz um Saint-Brice," in *Die Franken*, ed. Wieczorek et al., pp. 163–70; Michael Müller-Wille, "Königtum und Adel im Spiegel der Grabfunde," in *Die Franken*, ed. Wieczorek et al., pp. 206–21.

12 Chris Fern, "Early Anglo-Saxon Horse Burial of the Fifth to Seventh Centuries AD," *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 14 (2007), 92–107, and Fern, "Horses in Mind," in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, ed. Martin Carver, Alex Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (Oxford, 2010), pp. 128–57. The relative chronology of these burials is subject to debate; I present what I understand to be reasonable conclusions based on the current state of research.

Gaul that are of closely contemporary date,[13] exquisite gold-and-garnet objects in the Danubian mode make their debut in the archaeological record of northwest Europe.[14] Childeric's grave is unparalleled in these Western regions—again with the exception of Mound 1 at Sutton Hoo—in terms of the richness of its gold-and-garnet cloisonné furnishings. Moreover, certain of these objects have Hunnic antecedents. This is true in particular of the numerous cicada-motif mounts that, most likely, adorned the king's horse's robe.[15] Another feature of these furnishings that has Danubian and Pontic antecedents is the paired deposition of a double-bladed long sword and scabbard, richly adorned with gold-and-garnet cloisonné fittings, along with a comparably ornamented single-bladed short sword or *seax*. Prior to this time, the paired deposition of these two prestigious weapons had been a signature element of high-end warrior graves among the Alans, Sarmatians, and Huns.[16] In sum, as Noël Adams writes when summing up the impact of the Huns and their empire in the west:

> it is clear that the Hunnic overlordship produced a definable material culture shared by many peoples. The outcome of Hunnic hegemony was a radical transformation of imagery, material culture (including personal ornaments, weaponry, and horse harness), and social customs in the fifth century.[17]

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13 Michel Kazanski, "Deux riches tombes de l'époque des grandes invasions au nord de la Gaule (Airan et Pouan)," *Archéologie médiévale* 12 (1982), 17–33; Kazanski, "La diffusion de la mode danubienne en Gaule (fin du IVe siècle—debut du Ve siècle): Essai d'interpretation historique," *Antiquités nationales* 11 (1989), 59–73. See also Wieczorek and Périn, *Gold der Barbarenfürsten*, pp. 72–74, 144–46; Philippe Riffaud-Longuespé, "The Treasure of Pouan (France)," in *Rome and the Barbarians*, ed. Aillagon, pp. 322–23; and more generally *Attila: Les influences danubiennes dans l'ouest de l'Europe au Ve siècle*, ed. Jean-Yvres Marin (Caen, 1990).

14 This topic is treated by Noël Adams, *Bright Light in the Dark Ages: The Thaw Collection of Early Medieval Ornaments* (New York, 2014), in the course of her authoritative analysis of Migration Age styles in the visual arts.

15 Examples from Childeric's tomb are on display in the Cabinet des Médailles in the Bibliothèque nationale, Paris; for photos see Wieczorek and Périn, *Gold der Barbarenfürsten*, p. 173 (catalogue number 4.16.4.2) or Aillagon, *Rome and the Barbarians*, p. 347. For 5th-century Danubian or Pontic examples of the cicada motif, see Adams, *Bright Light*, p. 64.

16 Dan Lichiardopol and Bogdan Ciupercă, "The Presence of the Alans in the Lower Danube Region during the Age of the Huns," in *Hunnen zwischen Asien und Europa: Aktuelle Forschungen zur Archäologie und Kultur der Hunnen* (Langenweissbach, 2008), pp. 109–18. For an example from a 5th-century chamber grave of Alanic style in the north Caucasus region of Russia, see Wieczorek and Périn, *Gold der Barbarenfürsten*, pp. 142–43.

17 Adams, *Bright Light*, p. 57.

An appreciation of the innovatively eastern character of Childeric's barrow grave goes far to promote one's understanding of the origin myth of the Franks as narrated by Gregory of Tours. As we have seen, Gregory relays to his readers the oral tradition that the Franks came originally from Pannonia—that is to say, from the Danubian basin—before colonizing the banks of the Rhine and electing long-haired kings (*regi criniti*) to rule over them, ones who were "chosen from the foremost and most noble family of their race." If one rereads this chapter of Gregory's history with an eye to relevant archaeological evidence, then one is led to the following inferences.[18]

– The mention of Pannonia can be taken at its face value, with the understanding that what this oral history pertains to is not the origins of the Franks as a *gens*, but rather the origins of certain elements in the Frankish ruling class. As a result of the Huns' invasions and conquests, the Roman provinces of Upper and Lower Pannonia were assimilated into the Hunnic empire and, indeed, seem to have served as a chief base of Attila's military campaigns up to the time of his death in the year 453. During the "warring states" period that followed that unanticipated event, numerous warlords and statesmen strove with one another for power, with the result that a new tier of leaders eventually gained authority in much of Europe and Central Asia.[19] Childeric's father, the legendary Merovech,[20] appears to have been one of those men, insofar as he was a historical character and not just a creature of myth.
– The prominent attention given to Thuringia in these chapters of Gregory's history reflects that region's importance as part of the core of the expansive

18 Here my argument converges with the one advanced by Hans J. Hummer, "Franks and Alamanni: A Discontinuous Ethnogenesis," in *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 9–21. The uses—and the frequent notorious unreliability—of oral tradition as a source of knowledge of the past is analysed by Shami Ghosh in his contribution to the present volume.

19 Overviews of these historical events include Peter Heather, *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians* (Oxford, 2006); Christopher Kelly, *The End of Empire: Attila the Hun and the Fall of Rome* (New York, 2009); Hyun Jin Kim, *The Huns* (Milton Park, 2016); and Christoph Baumer, *The History of Central Asia*, vol. 2, *The Age of the Silk Roads* (London, 2014), esp. pp. 81–112. The related archaeological record is surveyed in the well-illustrated volume *Attila und die Hunnen*, ed. Historisches Museum der Pfalz Speyer (Stuttgart, 2007).

20 Merovech's parentage is addressed and problematized in the third book of the *Fredegar* chronicles, where we are told that Chlodio's wife was attacked while bathing in the sea by a "bestea Neptuni Quinotauri similis" ("a sea-monster like a quinotaur," a beast with foreparts like a bull). She thereafter became pregnant with the son who became the legendary founder of the Merovingian dynasty. Merovech is thus imagined as a demi-human figure, hence a fitting one to stand at the head of a new dynasty.

kingdom over which Childeric ruled. To judge from the archaeological record, certain elements of the Hunnic cultural complex may have been introduced to Europe via that geographical route.[21] Significantly, Thuringians were among Attila's allies when Hunnic armies invaded Gaul in the summer of 451, two years before his death in 453. Since Childeric died less than 30 years after Attila did, he had apparently spent his formative years, including his period of residence in Thuringia, directly in the shadow cast by Attila's empire in the West.

– The long-haired kings that the Franks are said to have chosen for themselves were probably just that: rulers who wore their hair long, in keeping with a hairstyle that, although antithetical to Greek and Roman custom, is well attested in the archaeological record of the semi-nomadic peoples of Eurasia.[22] Gregory tells us that this choice of hairstyle characterized the men who arrived in north-west Europe "from Pannonia." Worth note in this connection is that the triumph of the long-haired kings in Gaul was accompanied by regicidal violence, seeing that Gregory specifies that Theudomer (the former king of the Franks) and his mother Ascyla were put to the sword. What the evidence points to is a sudden change both in the make-up of the Frankish ruling class and in the visual signifiers of Frankish kingship, including hairstyle.[23] A related fact that may be significant is that in southern Scandinavia during roughly this same period (*c*.375–450), hundreds of 'type C' gold bracteates were produced that featured a mythological 'rider' with conspicuously long hair. The hair is often shown as being braided at the back in a style that is exotic in Europe at this time, so that

21 Thomas Huck, "Thüringer und Hunnen," in *Attila und die Hunnen*, ed. Historisches Museum der Pfalz-Speyer (Stuttgart, 2007), pp. 322–33. See further *Ur- und Frühgeschichte Thüringens: Ergebnisse archäologischer Forschung in Text und Bild*, ed. Sigrid Dušek (Stuttgart, 1999), and Wilfried Menghin, "The Thuringian Kingdom," in *The Merovingian Period: Europe without Borders: Archaeology and History of the Fifth to Eighth Centuries*, ed. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (Berlin, 2007), pp. 158–67.

22 Long-standing scholarly debates as to the origin and significance of the long hair of the Merovingian kings are summed up by Erik Goosmann, "The Long-Haired Kings of the Franks: 'Like So Many Samsons'?," *Early Medieval Europe* 20 (2012), 233–59, along with his fresh contribution to the subject (one that differs from my own). On hair as an ethnic marker see Walter Pohl, "Hairstyles and Body Signs," at pp. 51–61 of his chapter "Telling the Difference: Signs of Ethnic Identity," in *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300–800*, ed. Walter Pohl with Helmut Reimitz (Leiden, 1998), pp. 17–69, and for general discussion see now *A Cultural History of Hair*, vol. 2, *In the Middle Ages*, ed. Roberta Milliken (London, 2019).

23 Childeric's flowing hairstyle—braided to either side and parted at the top—is represented in stylized form in the signet ring, featuring his portrait, that he evidently wore into the grave. See James, *The Franks*, plate 13 (p. 62).

> one is left wondering if it was based on the physical appearance of ethnic Huns or other leading constituents of the Hunnic empire, which reached the height of its influence during the period when these bracteates were manufactured.[24]

The Odoacer of Gregory's account—the warlord and statesman who was apparently first Childeric's rival and then his ally—is a noteworthy example of the ethnic complexities of this period.[25] Odoacer's father, it is thought, was Edika, a high-ranking minister to Attila who became king of the Danubian Scirians in the aftermath of Attila's death. The Scirian kingdom, however, did not outlast Edika's death in battle at the hands of Goths in 469. Edika's sons then fled that region. When Odoacer eventually gained control over much of Italy, he adopted the symbols of power of *Romanitas*. Perhaps significantly, Odoacer's older brother was named 'Hunulf,' a Germanic name with obvious Hunnic import. Hunulf (a shortened form of 'Hun-wulf') first became commander-in-chief of Illyria, then joined Odoacer in Ravenna and became his right-hand man.

The point of these remarks is to suggest that having Hunnic connections—whether blood ties or diplomatic ones—was the norm for the rulers who came to power in multiple regions of Eurasia during the chaotic years that followed Attila's death. These northern and eastern connections carried prestige. So too did the high-end material goods that were emblems of status among Hunnic-led military elites and that came to be prized, with local adaptations, by comparable elites from Scandinavia to North Africa, including post-Roman Gaul in particular. It is probably in this light that one can best view the spectacular career and lavish funeral of Childeric, the first historically attested king of the Merovingian royal line and the son of the shadowy Merovech. Whoever arranged Childeric's funeral obsequies, with its horse sacrifices and exotic accoutrements, those people wished to make unambiguous gestures toward that king's Eurasian connections, not just his Germanic and Roman ones. When Gregory of Tours reports that "many say" that the pagan Franks from

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24 For an authoritative overview of the bracteates and their iconography, see Morten Axboe, *Brakteatstudier* (Copenhagen, 2007), with English summary at pp. 141–58 and an analysis of hairstyles and related facial details at pp. 127–39. See also Lotte Hedeager's discussion of the iconography of the C-bracteates in her article "Scandinavia and the Huns: An Interdisciplinary Approach to the Migration Era," *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 40 (2007), 42–58, at p. 52 in particular.

25 Robert L. Reynolds and Robert S. Lopez, "Odoacer: German or Hun?," *American Historical Review* 52 (1946), 36–53, and note also Herwig Wolfram, "Odovacar; or the Roman Empire that Did Not End," chapter 8 (pp. 183–93) of his book *The Roman Empire and Its Germanic Peoples* (Berkeley, 1997).

whom Merovech and Childeric were evidently descended left Pannonia as a group and settled in the Rhineland, the story that he relays to his readers pertains to legend rather than to what we mean by history, and yet there may have been truth-value in it, even if only as an attempt to come to terms with the exotic character of certain elements of Frankish material culture.

2 *Fredegar* and the *Liber Historiae Francorum*

Each of the two later histories of the Franks to which I will now turn, the *Chronicle of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum*, is a long and complex document, *Fredegar* in particular since it consists of two separate accounts of Frankish origins. The second of these is largely dependent on the first while differing from it in important details. For the sake of brevity I will summarize these narratives rather than quoting them at length.[26]

According to the first *Fredegar* narrative, three groups of refugees fled Troy after its fall. One group went to Macedonia and intermarried with the Macedonians, and among their later rulers, according to this account, were King Philip and his son Alexander the Great. A second group travelled from Phrygia into other parts of Asia, waging war as they went, before eventually turning toward Europe and settling down "between the Rhine, the Danube, and the sea" (inter Renum et Danuvium et mare). These geographical specifications would evidently locate this group along the Danubian basin through present-day Hungary and Romania, taking "the sea" to be the Black Sea. This second group is said to have adopted the name 'Franks' after the name of their king, Francio. In the course of time they forged alliances first with the Romans and then, rebelling against Rome, with the Saxons (*Saxoni*).[27] The third group of emigrants from Troy was the Turks (the *gens Torcorum*). They settled down with their wives and children "above the bank of the river Danube between the ocean and Thrace" (super litore Danuviae fluminis inter Ocianum et Traciam). This would locate them in the region of present-day Romania and Bulgaria, again taking "the ocean" to denote the Black Sea. This third group took their name

26 The first of the *Fredegar* accounts is perhaps most readily approached through the English translation that Richard A. Gerberding folds into his book *The Rise of the Carolingians and the "Liber historiae Francorum"* (Oxford, 1987) at pp. 14–16, read together with Krusch's edition of the Latin text in MGH, Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum 2, 2nd ed. (Hanover, 1956), pp. 45–47.

27 The term "Saxons" is apparently used here as a rough synonym for German-speakers rather than referring to a specific ethnic group.

from their king, Turquotus, "but since they waged many wars, and since their numbers were diminished by Turquotus, when they settled near the Rhine [only] a small band remained."

The second *Fredegar* account differs from the first one in certain details. According to this version of the story, the Trojan ancestors of the Franks separated initially into two groups, not three.[28] One group came to Macedonia. The other, called the Frigii after their king Frigas, travelled through parts of Asia before settling "on the shore of the river Danube and the ocean" (litoris Danuvii fluminis et mare Ocianum). This specification would place them close by the mouth of the Danube, once again taking "the ocean" to denote the Black Sea. In turn, this group split into two, with half of its members remaining in place and the other half entering Europe with King Francio. The western group, we are told, settled by the bank of the Rhine, and not far from there "they undertook the building of the city in the image of and with the name of Troy (*Trogiae nominis*)."[29] The group that stayed by the Danube elected a man named Torcot (*Torcoth*) as their king and hence became known as 'Turks' (*Turchi*). The group that moved on to the Rhineland and parts of present-day France took on the name 'Franks' after the name of their king, Francio. Later still the Franks chose from among themselves a long-haired king, "just as there had been in earlier times."

Turning now to the author of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, this unknown writer tells a similar story, but in a manner that is partly independent of both the *Fredegar* accounts.[30] In this version of events, a large body of Trojans who left Troy after the fall of that city sailed to the banks of the river Don and into the Sea of Azov (the "Maeotian swamps"), at the northern shore of the Black Sea. Here the incomers penetrated "within the borders of the Pannonians adjacent to the Sea of Azov" (intra terminos Pannoniarum iuxta Meotidas paludes). This is a statement that is hard to construe, for Upper and Lower Pannonia were Roman provinces situated in the Carpathian basin rather than lands adjacent to the Black Sea; the author may have had only a hazy notion of the geography of which he speaks. In any event, we are told that here they built a fine city, "Sicambria." (§2) The Roman emperor Valentinian then recruited this

28 See Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, at pp. 15–16, along with the same MGH edition as is cited in note 26, pp. 93–95.

29 The reference here is to the city of Troyes—the former Roman city of Augustobona Tricassium—located on the banks of the river Seine approximately 200 miles west of the Rhine.

30 For the Latin text see the same MGH edition as is cited above, pp. 241–51, together with translations by Gerberding, *Rise of the Carolingians*, pp. 173–74 (for chapters 1–4) and by Bernard S. Bachrach, ed. and trans., *Liber historiae Francorum* (Lawrence, 1973), pp. 27–33 (for chapters 5–9). Chapter divisions are marked by the symbol §.

group to drive out the Alans, the Iranian-speaking people whose homeland included the northern Pontic steppes. In reward for this service, the Romans granted the Trojan refugees an exemption from payment of taxes. On account of their hardness and bravery, this group was at the same time given the name of Franks, one that the author takes to mean "warlike ones" (*feros*). (§3) The Franks subsequently rose up against the Romans and their tax collectors, and the Romans sent an army against them. (§4) Those Franks who survived the subsequent fighting then travelled "to the farthest reaches of the Rhine in the strongholds of the Germanies" (in extremis partibus Reni fluminis in Germaniarum oppidis). The first of their long-haired kings was Faramund. (§5) The second was Chlodio, who (as in Gregory of Tours's account) lived in the stronghold at Dispargum on the borders of Thuringia. After Chlodio's death, Merovech became king. During his reign Attila's Huns crossed the Rhine, sacked a number of cities, and besieged the city of Orléans but were driven back.[31] (§6) After Merovech's death, his son Childeric became king.

The remainder of this section of the *Liber historiae Francorum* corresponds closely enough to Gregory of Tours's account that there is no need to summarize it here.

Again, what can be made of these versions of the Frankish origin myth in the light of other evidence pertaining to the early history of the Franks?

As is typical of medieval mythmaking, the model by which each of these early Frankish sources accounts for that people's prehistory is based on concepts of migration. The Franks were once a single people living somewhere to the east of their ultimate homeland, all three sources assert. Circumstances then—according to the two later accounts—forced them to split up into different groups in a broad swathe of Eurasia extending from the river Don, which flows into the Sea of Azov, to the river Rhine. The Danubian river basin, corresponding to much of present-day Austria, Hungary, and Romania, formed a natural corridor between these two far-flung regions. (Gregory speaks only of the movement of Franks from Pannonia to the Rhineland, making no mention of the northern Pontic region.) This is the gist of the matter as is set forth in these sources, leaving differences of detail aside. The movement of ancestral Franks within this geographical zone was basically from east to west, we are told, with the Rhineland as the ultimate point of arrival of those emigrants who persisted in the journey and who survived the wars and other factors that attended their movements.

The model that I have just summarized, however, will never win the assent of present-day historians and archaeologists. This is because there is strong

31 This historical series of events can be dated to the year 451.

evidence that large numbers of people who called themselves Franks were settled continuously in the region of the lower Rhine for at least two centuries prior to Childeric's reign.[32] Any movements of peoples that occurred to the east of the Rhineland during this period, therefore, are likely to have involved only a relatively small number of people who could be termed 'Franks.'

Can a historical model be developed that can be reconciled with both the relevant archaeological evidence that dates from this period and the myth of origins that the Franks told about themselves?

An affirmative answer to this question can be discerned, I believe, as long as one posits that the Frankish chroniclers were doing their best to reconcile their sense that the Franks were, after all, a Rhineland people, with their knowledge that at a formative stage in their early history, incomers from the east had introduced elements of a distinctive culture to the region, thus making a sharp enough break with the past to define the Franks as a 'new' people distinct from what they had been before. In short, the Franks became the people of the long-haired kings, defined as much by their Danubian- and Pontic-style customs and material goods as by their debt to Rome and to the less-than-ostentatious culture of the Rhineland as it had been before.

In this light, what is intriguing about the Frankish myth of origins is that it bears a resemblance to what is known about the step-by-step westward expansion of the Hunnic Empire.[33] It was the Huns, as is well known from both historical accounts and the archaeological record, who arrived in the northern Pontic region in the early 4th century C.E. and who conquered the Alans, drawing many of them into their alliance before then, in the 370s and thereafter, conquering the Crimean Goths and absorbing many Goths, too, into their expanding empire. These peoples, along with Sarmatians and others, formed the core of the great confederacy that then won control of the Roman provinces of Dacia and upper and lower Pannonia, striking south from there into what is now Macedonia and Thrace while asserting Hunnic control over much of the Balkans. Hunnic influence or control likewise extended north toward the Rhine and the Baltic Sea. And in the year 451, Attila mounted an expedition across the Rhine that terrorized much of Gaul.

In short, the myth that is related by the authors of *The Chronicle* (or *Chronicles*) *of Fredegar* and the *Liber historiae Francorum* about the migration of ancestral Franks from the Pontic region first to Pannonia, then to the Rhineland, with incidental reference as well to Macedonia, Thuringia, and other parts of Europe, provides a fairly close parallel to the advance of Hunnic power

32 James, *The Franks*, pp. 34–58.

33 Here my argument echoes that of Hummer, "Franks and Alamanni," at p. 13 in particular.

across this same swathe of Eurasia. On a smaller scale, the same is true of Gregory of Tours's earlier account of the migration of ancestral Franks from Pannonia to the Rhineland.

It is suggestive in this light that in both *Fredegar* accounts, groups of Franks are identified with 'Turks,' even to the point that in the first *Fredegar* narrative, those Franks who are called 'Turks,' and who settle down in the Rhineland, are the ones who established long-haired kings as their rulers. While the term 'Turks' here refers first of all to the Franks' putative associations with ancient Troy, also worth note is that the Huns evidently spoke a Turkic language and were known for their eastern customs and exotic physical appearance. If there were military leaders of Frankish ethnicity who saw service with Attila as allies or mercenaries (as many other speakers of a Germanic language did), then it is not particularly puzzling that the *Fredegar* author saw reason to associate the Franks who were his ancestors with Turks.

3 Conclusions

It is well understood that the Franks of the Merovingian period had their origin in more than one group.[34] Medieval historians of the Franks who looked back upon this formative period from a later vantage point, from Gregory of Tours to the anonymous author of the *Liber historiae Francorum*, are agreed that the Franks were not indigenous to the Rhineland but rather came to that region as migrants from farther east. Although archaeological evidence rules out accepting that claim at its face value, for modern scholars to reject it out of hand runs the risk of arrogance, particularly now that archaeological evidence that has come to light since the 1980s provides strong evidence for eastern influences at Childeric's court.

One way of resolving this issue is to suppose that among the groups who constituted the Frankish people in the mid-5th century, during the period when Childeric succeeded his father Merovech and established his rule over Francia and Thuringia, were high-ranking military leaders who had played a role in Attila's confederacy as allies or mercenaries. Taking on the name of Franks (if they did not have that name already), those people helped to establish the

34 See Ian Wood, "Defining the Franks," pp. 53–54: the Franks "had their origin in more than one tribe, and there was more than one tribe of Franks, even though they all came to be ruled by one dynasty" (the Merovingian first of all). While Wood is thinking of the Rhineland Franks, the possible role of mobile military groups in this mix is also worth taking into account.

Merovingian royal line in Gaul through a military takeover that was attended by regicidal violence. In other words, while Gregory and other Frankish historians account for the origins of their people through a myth of migration, the same historical circumstances can more plausibly be approached as the result of multiple ethnogenesis. According to the model presented here, different populations either based in the Rhineland or moving into that area as newcomers merged with one another during the period following the breakup of Attila's empire. In particular, a small class of incomers who brought with them a militaristic ethos and certain markedly eastern customs and material goods (it is supposed) merged with a local population that remained largely in place, with all of these people eventually taking on the increasingly prestigious name of 'Franks.'

If this model has validity, then the cultural impact of the Hunnic Empire in the West was greater than has been thought by those modern writers who have emphasized the Germanic origins of the Franks to the exclusion of other elements. Whatever the historical realities are that underlie the Franks' own origin myths—myths that might not be nearly as fanciful as has been thought—one point should be clear. This is that the prestige value of having Pannonian or Danubian ancestral connections did not cease to exist after the Hunnic Empire itself disintegrated into separate spheres of influence. Rather, memories of Attila and his once-great empire cast a long shadow over early medieval Frankish historiography, just as they contributed to the great early medieval stories and storytelling cycles that explicitly feature the Huns and their allies as major players: the Old High German *Hildebrandslied*, the medieval Latin *Waltharius* saga, the Old Norse Eddic lays *Atlakviða* and *Atlamál in Grœnlenzko*, and the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied*.

It will be seen that my contribution to the present volume departs from the current scholarly consensus that medieval origin legends are most significant "not as sources for the distant past but for the light they cast on the political and cultural context within which the surviving texts were written" (quotation from the editors' Introduction, p. 21). The consensus referred to here represents a refreshing turn away from prior naive tendencies to accept origin legends at their face value.

Still, perhaps, there is more to be said on the topic than this. Singling out for attention the early origin legends of the Franks, what I have attempted to show is that these narratives deserve notice on both accounts. On one hand, they emphatically do cast light on the intellectual context within which they were written, as Helmut Reimitz makes clear in his essay in this volume. This intellectual context, I might add, was one in which claims to ancestral Eurasian connections still mattered, even centuries after the collapse of the Hunnic

empire. On the other hand, in addition to having this importance as a set of Carolingian conversation pieces, these legends might have more than a glimmer of truth-value in terms of what they can tell us about the actual Frankish past. This truth-value appears to have much to do with the transformative impact of the Hunnic confederacy on the elite cultures of much of early medieval Europe. This is a topic that has received less attention in Western historiography than it deserves, thanks partly to writers' ignorance of archaeological discoveries that have only recently come to light, and partly to the high prestige that has been set on Germanic or Roman continuities and on the heritage of Christian learning in the West.

A point about methodology follows. If one is to pursue the truth-value that just might lie behind a myth, then the historian's methods can take one only so far. One must also remain open to whatever evidence archaeology can provide. This is a point beautifully nuanced by Katherine Cross in her chapter later in this volume. Not to nuance the matter overmuch, however: if there are moments of the early medieval past where textual evidence and the independent evidence of material culture reinforce one another's validity (or strongly appear to do so), then to persist in regarding the resulting historical model as nonsense might strike an impartial observer as an act of unusual single-mindedness.

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CHAPTER 17

Origines gentium and the Long Shadow of Rome

Alheydis Plassmann

Recent research has highlighted the fact that barbarian *gentes*, when they encountered the Romans during what was once called the era of the 'barbarian invasions' but is now referred to as the 'transformation of the Roman world,' underwent a series of similar processes.[1] They were first incorporated into the Roman empire and blended with existing Roman culture before subsequently undergoing transformation as a result of which barbarian realms developed.[2] Examples of this process can be found in the histories of *gentes* including the Vandals, Goths, Franks, Saxons, and Lombards.[3] This very process awakened (or strengthened) a need among these *gentes* to define or express their distinct identities, and it is for this reason that we find origin stories for almost every *gens* that came into contact with the Romans in Late Antiquity and even well beyond the end of the Roman empire.[4] Origin stories provided the *gentes* with a convincing explanation of their current status. While the barbarian *gentes* wanted to be part of the Roman empire, they also wanted to legitimize the

1 The term was put forward by the research project *The Transformation of the Roman World* in Vienne (1993–97) which produced a series of the same title which is now continued as *Brill's Series on the Early Middle Ages*.

2 Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002) gives an excellent overview, cf. as one of the latest collected volumes: Walter Pohl, Clemens Gantner, Cinzia Grifoni, Marianne Pollheimer-Mohaupt, eds., *Transformations of Romanness: Early Medieval Regions and Identities* (Berlin, 2018).

3 The best example of this process of transformation and adaption that was heavily influenced by the Roman side is the notion of kingship cf. Stefanie Dick, *Der Mythos vom "germanischen Königtum": Studien zur Herrschaftsorganisation bei den germanischsprachigen Barbaren bis zum Beginn der Völkerwanderungszeit*, Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde. Ergänzungsbände 60 (Berlin, 2008).

4 On the genre cf. Alheydis Plassmann, *Origo gentis: Identitäts- und Legitimitätsstiftung in früh- und hochmittelalterlichen Herkunftserzählungen*, Orbis Medievalis – Vorstellungswelten des Mittelalters 7 (Berlin 2006), pp. 13–27, Magali Coumert, *Origines des peoples: Les récits du Haut Moyen Âge occidental (550–850)*, Collection des études augustiniennes. Série Moyen-Âge et temps modernes (Paris 2007); Alheydis Plassmann, "Lateinische Stammes- und Volksgeschichtsschreibung im frühen und hohen Mittelalter," in *Handbuch Chroniken des Mittelalters*, ed. Gerhard Wolf and Norbert Ott (Berlin, 2016), pp. 47–75. Herwig Wolfram, *Das Römerreich und seine Germanen: Eine Erzählung von Herkunft und Ankunft* (Vienna, 2018), pp. 51–58.

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altered conditions that had come about as a result of their interference—for themselves as well as the remaining sub-Roman communities—including their takeover of the Roman provinces and, in the case of the Goths, even of Rome itself. That is the reason why origin stories usually show preoccupation with the *gentes*' relationship to the Romans. For some *gentes* an evolution independent of the Romans was claimed, others invented a relationship with the Romans or the investiture of the *gens* via Roman officials; but regardless of the variation, all the origin stories address the relationship of the *gens* in question to the Romans.[5]

Modern preoccupation with these origin stories started early, when the rediscovery of Tacitus's *Germania* led to the emergence of a belief in the Germanic roots for modern nations, the most prominent being the Swedish claim to descend from the Goths (so-called Gothicism).[6] With the rise of history as an academic field at the beginning of the 19th century, origin stories were dealt with more sceptically, but still were often understood as the manifestation of an oral tradition of the *gentes* themselves. Even though they were written down much later than the time they described, the idea persisted that oral tradition had preserved a record of actual historical events. This was seemingly supported by the claim of many origin stories that oral tales were used while writing the story.[7] Nineteenth-century believers in a protonational history

5 Therefore, the relationship to Rome and the Roman Empire was crucial for each and every of these stories, be it by claiming an independent origin, be it by claiming common ancestry or relatedness, be it by claiming being founded by the Romans. On this cf. Alheydis Plassmann, "Zu den Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen germanischer *gentes*," in *Antike im Mittelalter – Fortleben, Nachwirken, Wahrnehmung: 25 Jahre Forschungsverbund "Archäologie und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends in Südwestdeutschland,"* ed. Sebastian Brather, Archäologie und Geschichte 21 (Ostfildern 2014), pp. 355–70.

6 On Tacitus and the hype about the Germanic tribes cf. Walter Pohl, "Vom Nutzen des Germanenbegriffes zwischen Antike und Mittelalter. Eine forschungsgeschichtliche Perspektive," in *Akkulturation: Probleme einer germanisch-romanischen Kultursynthese in Spätantike und frühem Mittelalter*, ed. Dieter Hägermann, Wolfgang Haubrichs, and Jörg Jarnut, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde 41 (Berlin, 2004), pp. 18–35; Jörg Jarnut, "Germanisch. Plädoyer für die Abschaffung eines obsoleten Zentralbegriffs der Frühmittelalterforschung," in *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen: Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Walter Pohl, Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters. Denkschriften 8 (Vienna, 2004), pp. 107–13; Dick, *Mythos*, pp. 59–65; Christopher B. Krebs, *Ein gefährliches Buch: Die "Germania" des Tacitus und die Erfindung der Deutschen* (Munich, 2012).

7 For example, Paul the Deacon: Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, ed. Ludwig Carl Bethmann and Georg Waitz, MGH SS rer Germ 48 (Hannover, 1878), 1.8, p. 58, although he called the Lombard origin story a *ridicula fabula*. On oral tradition cf. Michael Richter, *The Oral Tradition in the Early Middle Ages*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental (Turnhout, 1994).

that underpinned the existence of the nations of the Europe of their day were enthusiastic about finding what they thought were genuine records of ancient oral traditions. Origin stories were believed to give us reliable information about the real migration of the *gentes*. It was suspected that every *gens* had had an oral tradition about their origin and that the origin story was a natural and necessary ingredient of the tradition of the late-antique barbarian *gens*, an orally transmitted history that gave the bare bones of the factual history of the *gens*.[8] Origin stories in their written form were understood as being the product of the antiquarian approach of writers whose sole interest was the preservation of the orally transmitted 'facts' about the history of the *gens*. This widespread idea was shaped by the nationalistic historiographical search for continuous development towards the national entities of the 19th century. Even today, a mixture of origin stories and the occasional mention from late-antique Roman historians is often used to reconstruct the history of barbarian migrations, although most scholars have long abandoned the idea that origin stories contain accurate accounts of real events.[9]

In addition to the notion that they preserved orally transmitted facts about the *gentes*, the origin stories that were to be found in early histories were bundled together and subsumed under a genre, the *origo gentis*, or *Volksgeschichte* in German, even though origin stories were handed down in many different contexts, of which historiography was just one. It was understood that this was a genre that was typical for Late Antiquity and the establishment of the post- or sub-Roman order in Europe.[10] Sometimes the origin story was understood to be a genre on its own, distinct from the longer historiographical context in which it was found; sometimes the whole history of the *gens* of which the origin story was just a part was considered a single work. In the highly influential handbook on historiography by Herbert Grundmann from 1957, republished in several editions until 1991, the *Volksgeschichte* was identified as a genre that mirrored the history of the *gentes*:

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8 On this cf. Herbert Grundmann, *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter: Gattungen – Epochen – Eigenarten*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1965), p. 8 on the oral tradition of the Germanic *gentes*.

9 Cf. the colourful map in Cornelsen Schülerbuch NRW: *Entdecken und Verstehen*, vol. 1, *Von der Urgeschichte bis zum Mittelalter* (Berlin, 2011), p. 25.

10 On the history of the misunderstanding as genre cf. also Hans Hubert Anton, Matthias Becher, Walter Pohl, Herwig Wolfram, and Ian N. Wood, "Origo gentis," in *Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, vol. 22 (Berlin, 2003), pp. 174–210, especially Herwig Wolfram, "Origo gentis. Allgemeines," ibidem, pp. 174–78. On the genre also Joaquín Martínez Pizarro, "Ethnic and National History ca. 500–1000," in *Historiography in the Middle Ages*, ed. Deborah Mauskopf Deliyannis (Leiden, 2003), pp. 43–87 as well as Plassmann, *Origo gentis* and Coumert, *Origines*.

> This survey shows, how one people after another, from the south to the west and from the east to the north, entered into the daylight of ethnic historiography [Volksgeschichtsschreibung] and embraced it. The late Romans conveyed it to the Germans, and these in turn to their eastern neighbours, in a movement that touched all of Europe, mirroring the migration of culture. Although literary traditions are at work, each and every one of these ethnic historiographies has its own unique character, takes on and absorbs their own oral tradition, and fuels pride in their own history.[11]

At the core of this understanding of the *origo gentis* as a genre was the idea that the Germanic tribes were shaped by a common culture which scholars believed to be reflected in several areas, of which historiography was just one. This idea of common Germanic characteristics has been abandoned for some time now, and it has been stressed that common features are to be better explained by the shared experience of contact with the Romans by the different barbarian *gentes*, who were not all Germanic in any case.[12]

The interpretation of the *origo gentis* as a genre specific to Germanic *gentes*, handed down by antiquarians, has been slowly dismantled for every aspect that stood at the core of the original assumption. Recent scholarship has critiqued and severely undermined beliefs in the antiquarian outlook of the writers, the veracity of their supposedly orally transmitted histories, and the unspoken idea of a common Germanic culture. The first real challenge to this accumulation of assumptions was the seminal work of Reinhard Wenskus, his *Stammesbildung und Verfassung*—a book which had a great impact on the interpretation of origin stories, most of all in German-speaking countries.[13]

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11 Herbert Grundmann, *Geschichtsschreibung im Mittelalter*, p. 16: "Dieser Umblick zeigt, wie ein Volk nach dem andern, vom Süden über Westen und Osten nach Norden, ins Licht dieser Volksgeschichtsschreibung trat und sie sich zu eigen machte. Die späten Römer vermittelten sie an die Germanen und diese an ihre östlichen Nachbarn in einem großen Zug quer durch Europa, der die Kulturwanderung spiegelt. So sehr dabei literarische Traditionen wirksam sind, hat doch jede dieser Volksgeschichten ihr eigenes Gepräge, nimmt die heimische mündliche Überlieferung in sich auf und nährt daran den Stolz auf die eigene Geschichte" (translated by AP).

12 Geary, *Myth*, pp. 93–119, on the ethnogenesis of the barbarian *gentes* in the context of the Roman world; Jarnut, "Germanisch"; Bruno Bleckmann, *Die Germanen: Von Ariovist bis zu den Wikingern* (Munich, 2009), pp. 11–41; Herwig Wolfram, "Wie schreibt man heute ein Germanenbuch und warum immer noch eins?," in *Völker, Reiche und Namen im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Matthias Becher and Stefanie Dick, MittelalterStudien 22 (Munich, 2010), pp. 15–43. Wolfram, *Römerreich und seine Germanen*.

13 Reinhard Wenskus, *Stammesbildung und Verfassung* (Cologne, 1961).

It was subsequently taken up and discussed in anglophone scholarship, and although it was mostly (wrongfully) discussed as a part of the 'Germanicist' tradition and interpretation that should be overcome, it may yet be considered very influential.

Wenskus chose to challenge the veracity of origin accounts—by which he meant specifically those parts in the late-antique ethnic histories that actually dealt with origins—and analysed them from the point of view of their function. He doubted the assumption that the *gens* stayed the same throughout its history. At the core of his criticism was the doubt that a story obviously told to create a sense of identity could be used as proof that this identity existed. He assumed that the idea of a common descent and origin was passed down by the military elite of the *gens*, its core members, and that it was used to mask the reality. The reality of the late-antique *gentes* meant that the core of the *gens*, the *exercitus* that was engaged by the Romans to fight for them, had a very fluid identity.[14] Barbarian soldiers of all kinds were adopted into the Roman military system as *foederati*. The barbarian *exercitus* was thus under the authority of the Roman generals while at the same time mostly independent in regard to law, and, even more importantly, political organization under a military leader, a leader they most often called king.[15] Fighting for the Romans, they often integrated other barbarians of various descent into the *exercitus*. Their only commonality was the idea that they could look back on a common origin and a common migration history. Wenskus called this core of the *exercitus*—which promoted a sense of unity and common identity for the *gens* that was anything but a biologically coherent body—the *Traditionskern*, 'core of tradition.' He thus linked the *origo gentis* he still saw as a genre of historiography with the process of 'ethnogenesis,' the process of how a barbarian *gens* came to settle in the Roman empire and take on a new identity. This identity was shaped by their new environment and their experience of fighting for the Romans. Emulating the Romans and slowly merging within the remnants of the empire was an integral part of this 'ethnogenesis.'

Responses to Wenskus's work have varied. On the one hand, he has been accused by his critics of maintaining a Germano-centric approach, though it is often overlooked that his argument regarding adaptation into the Roman world basically denies any idea of common Germanic features. On the other,

14 On the importance of the *exercitus* cf. Stefanie Dick, "Der römische Einfluss auf die Gesellschaftsentwicklung bei den germanischen *gentes*. Zum Verhältnis von Kriegertum und Herrschaftsorganisation," in *Antike im Mittelalter*, ed. Brather, pp. 143–51; Hans-Ulrich Wiemer, *Theoderich der Große: König der Goten – Herrscher der Römer* (Munich, 2018), pp. 205–31.

15 On kingship cf. Dick, *Mythos*, pp. 203–14.

his perspective on origin stories has been developed further by the Vienna school. The notion of *Traditionskern* is rarely used nowadays, but the idea that we should above all look at the function of these stories in the context within which they were written still lies at the core of the Vienna school's beliefs and has led to several fruitful approaches to the problem of identity in Late Antiquity.[16] In the anglophone world, Susan Reynolds was the first to stress the importance of origin stories for the history of identity, and made a strong case for researching the purpose of the origin story in relation to the community's sense of identity.[17] In her thought-provoking essay, she linked early medieval origin stories with other identity-shaping stories from the high Middle Ages and thus firmly set the focus on the function of the stories, advancing Wenskus's idea.

Wenskus's argument has been challenged by Walter Goffart in his equally influential *Narrators of Barbarian History*, published in 1988.[18] Goffart interpreted Wenskus's approach as a defence of the idea that common Germanic features could be found in origin legends. He wanted to shake the belief that the *origo gentis* was a genre. While Wenskus had successfully challenged the belief that origin legends were expressions of objectively existing identities, Goffart attacked the notion of a common 'Germanic' culture that supposedly

16 Cf. for example Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850* (Cambridge 2015); Roland Steinacher, *Die Vandalen: Aufstieg und Fall eines Barbarenreiches* (Stuttgart 2016); Manuel Koch, *Ethnische Identität im Entstehungsprozess des spanischen Westgotenreiches*, Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. Ergänzungsbände 75 (Berlin, 2012); cf. ibidem, pp. 9–24 on a description of the Vienna school.

17 Susan Reynolds, "Medieval *origines gentium* and the Community of the Realm," in *History: The Journal of the Historical Association* 68 (1983), 375–90. Reynolds was not aware that her thoughts actually fall into line with Wenskus.

18 Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, 1988). Like Wenskus, Goffart had many pupils who followed his interpretation cf. e.g. Florin Curta, *The Making of the Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500–700*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought. Fourth Series (Cambridge, 2001). A summary of Goffart's ideas can be found in Andrew Gillet, "Introduction: Ethnicity, History, and Methodology," in *On Barbarian Identity: Critical Approaches to Ethnicity in the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Gillet, Studies in the Early Middle Ages 4 (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 1–18. In the last mentioned collected volume only Walter Pohl contributed as a member of the Vienna school: Walter Pohl, "Ethnicity, Theory, and Tradition: A Response," ibidem, pp. 221–39. On this scholarly debate which is discussed with occasional heat, cf. Peter J. Heather, "Ethnicity, Group Identity, and Social Status in the Migration Period," in *Franks, Northmen, and Slavs: Identities and State Formation in Early Medieval Europe*, ed. Ildar H. Garipzanov (Turnhout 2008), pp. 17–49. Heather shows sympathy for the Vienna school, but nevertheless gives an unbiased overview. Lately, the discussion has ebbed somewhat.

was the basis for the narrative structure of a historiographical genre of *origo gentis*.

Goffart took four of the most prominent examples of late-antique histories usually assigned to the *origo gentis* genre and examined them strictly as pieces of literature. He did not set them in the context of a pre-existing genre of origin stories but took the linguistic turn to heart and applied it to the histories of Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon. Since origin stories are usually not handed down as a single tale but are set in the wider context of [a] history, neither the immediate context within which they are found in the longer text nor the conditions within which it was created as a literary work should be neglected, and Goffart drew our attention to this.

While Goffart understood his work as a rebuttal of Wenskus, it is rather the case that both complement each other. Recognition that origin legends only survive as pieces of literature, and are therefore open to literary analysis, is not necessarily at odds with the belief that they served a function for an evolving society. The historians Goffart looked at provide us with evidence that there was an oral tradition, and even if we have no idea what this actually looked like, this does not invalidate the possibility that these origin stories were used to ensure the solidarity and cohesion of the *exercitus*, as Wenskus argued. Wenskus and Goffart do not necessarily contradict each other, but should both be understood as attacking from different angles the idea that origin legends constitute a coherent genre shaped by a common Germanic culture.

Goffart made an effort to explain the histories he examined as being part of an antique/late-antique literary tradition and identified Jordanes as comedy, Gregory of Tours as satire, etc. He made a strong case for considering origin stories in connection with the wider literary environment, as well within the story itself as within the context of their time. He provided a justification for rejecting the old ideas that it was possible to reconstruct accurate accounts of migrations from the content of the origin stories. Yet, his very strict subsuming of the historiography he examined into existing genres has not won universal favour. While the influence of literary genres on historiography is widely accepted, his identification of the late-antique texts he studies as examples of specific classical genres fails to acknowledge the fact that they adhere to the generic characteristics of historiography as they were understood in Late Antiquity.[19]

Wenskus looked at the function of the origin story, ultimately neglecting the question of where and how it was handed down to us, while Goffart looked at the historical and literary background of the whole work in which the origin story was told, and therefore rather tried to answer the questions "who and

19 For criticism on Goffart cf. Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 16 and pp. 24–27.

how." That both scholars came to different conclusions is consequently no surprise. Both, however, shook the idea of a Germanic nature and the existence of the genre of *origo gentis*. Therefore, it can be argued that both approaches have their merit and can lead to insights, and for this one example should suffice. The origin story of the Ostrogoths is handed down to us in the *Getica* by Jordanes. Bypassing the problem that we do not know how much Jordanes took from the lost *History of the Goths* by Cassiodorus, we can focus on how certain parts of the *Getica* reflect literary and Roman influence, while others might be better interpreted as serving a function in Jordanes's own time.[20] Jordanes tells his audience that the Huns were descendants of female Goths accused of witchcraft and cast out by their *gens.*[21] Herwig Wolfram, following Wenskus's approach, saw this tale of the descent of the Huns as an explanation for the long-standing and often difficult relationship between Goths and Huns in the 5th century, as well as an attempt by the Goths to distance themselves from their past in the Hun army.[22] That does not necessarily mean that the Goths had an oral tradition about their link to the Huns, but it certainly makes sense that they would tell a story whose function was to explain their current relationship with the Huns. Thus, this would be an example of Wenskus's approach providing a decent explanation for an otherwise garbled tale. Understanding the intention of the tale does not necessarily necessitate claiming that an older oral tradition lay behind it.

Another section of the *Getica* makes much more sense if we put it into the literary and cultural context of the Romans. In the *Getica*, there is a long genealogy of the Amal dynasty over 17 generations.[23] As it happens, this is also the only part we can be fairly certain was borrowed from the older Gothic history of Cassiodorus, because we know that Cassiodorus had worked on the Amal genealogy for his king Theoderic.[24] Now Cassiodorus was a Roman senator, and he translated the ideas of nobility of the royal family into a pattern closely concordant with the genealogies of Roman senatorial families. Traditionally, it was thought that there had been 17 generations from Aeneas to Romulus.[25] Thus, we should not try to prove that there was a Gothic idea of nobility or a long-lasting

20 On this cf. Plassmann, "Lateinische Stammes- und Volksgeschichtsschreibung," pp. 51–52.

21 Jordanes, *Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, in MGH AA 5.1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. 53–138, at 24.121–22, p. 89.

22 Herwig Wolfram, *Die Goten: Von den Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts; Entwurf einer historischen Ethnographie*, 5th ed. (Munich, 2009), p. 259.

23 Jordanes, *Getica*, 14.79, pp. 76–77.

24 Cassiodor, *Variae*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 12 (Berlin 1894), 9.25, p. 292.

25 Peter Heather, "Cassiodorus and the Rise of the Amals. Genealogy and the Goths under Hun Domination," *Roman Studies* 79 (1989), 103–28; Alheydis Plassmann, "Herkunft und

royal family of Amals, but rather we should see Cassiodorus's Amal family tree for what it is: an attempt at cultural appropriation. It is indeed as Cassiodorus himself confirms: he made the genealogy of the Amals Roman.[26] To see the *Getica* in the context of Roman literature thus gives us insights as well.

Nevertheless, this principle should not be carried to extremes, as Goffart did. He made a case for seeing Jordanes as the propaganda writer for a faction in Byzantium that wanted a Gothic–Roman reconciliation and boldly stated that the *Getica* culminated in the marriage of the Gothic princess Mataswintha and the Roman general Germanus as a symbol of the Gothic–Roman alliance that would bring peace to Italy.[27] The *Getica* in Goffart's interpretation was nothing but a late-antique comedy with a happy ending, even if somewhat awkwardly written and not reaching this point for a very large portion of the story. Therefore, this interpretation erases about 90 per cent of the story of the *Getica*, and while it could be argued that it is possible that Jordanes saw the marriage of Mataswintha as a solution, this does not mean that writing comedy was all he was about.

Instead of tying the origin story to a literary genre, Magali Coumert chose a broader approach and investigated the motifs and themes of a large corpus of origin stories in the context of late-antique traditions regarding the history of *gentes*. She succeeded in placing the narrative patterns that used to be attributed to an oral tradition hinting at real events into the antique and late-antique literary tradition. She did not want to pinpoint the complete subsumption of origin legends into other genres as Goffart had done, but rather wanted to show the connectedness of the *gentes*' historiographies to the tropes of Antiquity. Her research has proven that the influence on origin legends of sources from outside the Roman literary context is very small indeed.[28] The narratives of the *gentes* are to be firmly tied into the late-antique geographical and historical tradition.

While the influence of classical literature on origin stories must by no means be neglected, it is still possible to investigate their function. For the origin story to have a function it is inconsequential if it was derived from literary or oral traditions. The function of the origin story, immanent firstly in the text it survives in and secondly shaped by what the society in which the writer lived needed, is not dependent on the author's source. Pinpointing a literary context

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Abstammung im Frühmittelalter," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Lingustik* 37, no. 147 (2007), 9–39, at pp. 11–13.

26 Cassiodor, *Variae*, 9.25, p. 292: "originem Gothicam historiam fecit esse Romanam."

27 Goffart, *Narrators*, pp. 20–111.

28 Coumert, *Origines*.

as has been so meticulously done by Coumert certainly cautions us against using origin stories as remnants of an oral tradition that gives us a window onto past migrations, but it doesn't rule out that oral traditions were used, nor does it prevent the origin story having a function that goes far beyond the original literary model. Identifying a literary source does not allow us to conclude anything about the intention of the author, only about his learning.

The question remains: is the classification of the *origo gentis* stories as a genre invalid as such? We can be certain that the writers of that time did not identify their works as part of a 'Germanic' tradition or an *origo gentis* genre. Nevertheless, it can be observed that within a certain set of conditions a community (for example a *gens*) required the stabilizing of its sense of identity that was achieved via a narrative about origins. This need was met by different *gentes* using similar methods and results, which go beyond the use of common motifs or narrative elements. Rarely, we can observe on behalf of the author of a late-antique history a self-awareness of being part of a literary tradition, most prominently when the origin was located in Scandinavia, an idea many writers took from Jordanes.[29] *Origo gentis* narratives are not comparable because they stem from common Germanic ideas—which never existed—or because they belong to a genre known as such to their authors, but because they respond to the challenge of forming identities and legitimizing social systems that arose in similar circumstances during the transformation of the Roman world. The *gens* is understood as a community of common descent without actually being one, and the difference from a *natio* of the High Middle Ages is that the connection to the rulers or a ruling family is stronger than the connection to a certain land.[30] The differences between origin stories and national histories are nevertheless fluid, because the connection to a certain territory becomes more prominent in later origin stories, like those penned by Dudo of Saint-Quentin or Widukind of Corvey.[31] The function of shaping identities and legitimizing systems means that the narrative patterns might have been taken for the main

29 On the Scandinavian origin cf. Jordanes, *Getica*, 4.25, p. 60 and Alheydis Plassmann, "Das Wanderungsmotiv als Gründungsmythos in den frühmittelalterlichen *Origines gentium*," in *Gründungsmythen Europas im Mittelalter*, ed. Michael Bernsen, Matthias Becher, and Elke Brüggen, Gründungsmythen Europas in Literatur, Musik und Kunst 6 (Bonn, 2013), pp. 61–77, at pp. 65–67 and Plassmann, "Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen," pp. 360–61.

30 Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 13–27.

31 On historiography of *nationes* cf. Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "nationes": Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter*, Münstersche Historische Forschungen 8 (Cologne, 1995), as well as the *Handbuch Chroniken des Mittelalters*, the chapters on "Europäische Chroniken," pp. 543–864.

part from antique and late-antique sources and yet are used for a different function in the context of the history of the *gens*. Because of their function, the origin stories that only form a part of longer histories cannot be separated from the overall context of the historiographic work as a whole, as has been done so frequently in the search for 'genuine' Germanic oral tradition. The narrative function of a certain motif, e.g. descent from Troy, cannot be deduced from the motif itself, but must be put into the context of the history of the *gens* as a whole.[32] Trojan descent and a relationship with the Romans can serve to separate the *gens* from the Romans, it can prove its superiority or comparability. The use of Trojan descent as such does not enlighten us as to why Trojan descent was mentioned.[33] Although the shaping of identities and legitimization of political institutions is a function common to these tales, the trope used for shaping identities does not allow the deduction of the exact framing of the identity.

An explanation of the development of origin legends could be as follows: in the lengthy process of the transformation of the Roman world and subsequently within the framework of contact with the Frankish kingdoms, a *gens*—after Christianization and adaptation to sub-Roman and/or Frankish conditions—was provided with a written history by either a Roman or a 'barbarian' author in which origin stories were used as a means of shaping the identity of the *gens* and legitimizing its ruling system and society. The narrative patterns as exemplified in the origin legend were used not only in the origin story itself but also in the subsequent history of their *gens*. We could name this process with Sigbjørn Sønnesyn as 'ethnopoiesis,' a term that denotes the active shaping of identity instead of the more passive idea of identity being shaped as is inherent in Wenskus's notion of 'ethnogenesis.'[34]

As we have now established what an origin story is, a closer look at which *gentes* had them might bring us closer to understanding the functionality of the *origo gentis*. Several late-antique/early medieval *gentes* had origin stories, including the Goths, Suevs, Franks, Lombards, (Anglo-)Saxons, Burgundians, and Normans. All these *gentes* have in common that they managed, at least for a short period of time, to establish a *regnum* of their own on the soil of the former Roman Empire. The Visigoths, whose origin story was told by Isidore, founded a realm in Gaul and later in Spain, the Ostrogoths ruled over Italy for

32 On this, Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 32–35.

33 Plassmann, "Wanderungsmotiv," p. 65 and Plassmann, "Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen," pp. 359–60.

34 Sigbjørn O. Sønnesyn, "The Rise of the Normans as Ethnopoiesis," in *Norman Tradition and Transcultural Heritage: Exchange of Cultures in the Norman Peripheries of Medieval Europe*, ed. Stephan Burkhardt and Thomas Foerster (Aldershot 2013), pp. 203–18.

about 70 years, the Franks took over Gaul, the Saxons Britain, and the Lombards Italy. Other quite prominent late-antique *gentes* like the Alemanni or the Alani have no known surviving origin stories. Thus, one could argue that one of the preconditions of getting an origin story was a stable realm for at least two generations.

A generation or two after the founding of the gentile/barbarian *regnum*, either a Roman who had learned about the *gens*, like Isidore, or a barbarian who had learned Latin literacy, like Jordanes for the Goths or Bede for the Anglo-Saxons, would take upon himself the task of writing down the history of the *gens*. It is no surprise that we find the most enduring traditions of origin stories in the realms that lasted longer, like the Frankish kingdom or the Anglo-Saxon *regna*. There we have more than one origin story, as well as several traditions and variants. But not all the *gentes* who founded *regna* on Roman soil have an origin story. Neither the Vandals, nor the Gepids, nor the Huns do, and time span alone does not suffice as an explanation. The Vandal kingdom lasted almost 100 years, about 30 years longer than the Ostrogoths, and yet they have no *origo gentis*—at least not one we know about. In addition, there are *gentes* like the Irish who never were part of the Roman Empire and yet had their own strong tradition of origin(s).[35]

Although a realm or, in a wider sense, a community (based on law or culture) of their own is clearly not an effectual condition for the development of an origin legend, it is nevertheless a necessary one. No *gens* that had no realm or sense of community of their own has an origin story.[36] And this makes sense. For a new structure to be stabilized by a connection with the distant past a certain amount of time has to have passed, and there has to be a certain connection with the Roman literary tradition. It is only in these circumstances that writing from the internal perspective of the *gens* emerges. The Vandals, for instance, had no such connection with the Romans at all, and consequently lacked the precondition for an origin story. So, on average, an origin story was written about 50 to 100 years after the foundation of the new realm, and it was written by a Roman favourably disposed towards the barbarian *gens* or by a barbarian author sufficiently educated to write a history. Its foremost purpose was to make sense of a situation that was new and yet not entirely new. Identity and legitimacy are at the core of the origin stories and their surrounding tales.

How the origin stories were handed down varies to a high degree. Most often the origin story is told in the context of a history of the *gens*, but it may

35 On the Irish origin stories cf. Thomas Charles-Edwards in this volume.

36 It could be argued that the Irish although they had no realm, still were a community with a sense of identity based on law and culture.

also be fitted into general history, church history, saints' legends, and law. This wide variety of means of embedding origin stories should have prevented the *origo gentis* being conceived as a genre in the first place. An origin story is a popular motif for selling tales, for setting the tone for the history as a whole, for introducing motifs and tropes that can be reiterated in the course of the narrative and adjusted to a pattern which would be familiar to the audience.

As a next step we will look at the variants of origin stories. These never contain the claim that the *gens* always stayed in one place and that their origin is lost in the past. Very rarely the question of the origin is not addressed, as in Gildas's *De conquestu Britanniae*, but this is essentially a sermon with a historical introduction. The author, who lived in sub-Roman Britain, did try to make sense of the situation of the Britons who inhabited the island after the Romans left and when the (Anglo-)Saxons arrived.[37] Considering the context of the emergence of origin stories, it makes sense that the autochthonous angle would be less likely to be used. It is far easier to start a story with a proper beginning and a change than just to state that there was no change. Considering that a relatively new situation had to be explained, it also makes sense to claim that things had not always been as they are. Therefore, the origin story as a story of migration is the usual variant of choice. There are four variants of the migration story, and they may even be combined to some extent or other. There is the option to connect the story of the *gens* to biblical history, thus firmly placing the *gens* within a context of salvation history and claiming ancient descent.[38] This is most often achieved by producing a genealogy that goes back to Noah and his sons, but in some rare occasions the context is a well-known biblical story, where the protagonist of the *gens* serves as a self-insert.[39] In the Irish origin legend, this would be the case with Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, who tried to persuade her father to spare the Jews and left Egypt when her advice was not heeded.[40] The biblical connection is not necessarily always with Noah. For the Goths, for example, the monstrous biblical people of Gog

37 Gildas, *The Ruin of Britain and Other Works*, ed. Michael Winterbottom, Arthurian Period Sources 7 (London, 1978), 2, p. 16 and p. 89; on Gildas cf. Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 36–51 and Alheydis Plassmann, "Gildas and the Negative Image of the Cymry," *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies* 41 (Summer 2001), 1–15.

38 This has been done for the royal family of Wessex, in the *Frankish Table of Nations* and in the *Historia Brittonum* cf. Plassmann, "Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen," p. 358; Plassmann, "Wanderungsmotiv," pp. 63–65.

39 See Walter Goffart, "The Supposedly 'Frankish' Table of Nations. An Edition and Study," *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* (17) 1983, 98–130 on the Frankish Table of Nations.

40 *Historia Brittonum*, ed. John Morris, Arthurian Period Sources 8 (London, 1980), 15, p. 21 and p. 62; Plassmann, "Wanderungsmotive," p. 64; Plassmann, "Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen," p. 359.

and Magog were identified as ancestors, and their origin was situated in Scandinavia, a region long connected to monstrous people.[41] This was something of a stroke of genius, because it gave the Goths a sufficiently ancient origin, connected them to classical tradition and also provided a ready interpretation for their story as an arc of redemption.[42] Gog and Magog tie in with the classical tradition of monstrous people and play with the motif of a redemptive arc that parallels the Goths with the chosen people, and can be interpreted as a reflection on Augustine's salvation history: the devilish *gens* that was destined to come south towards civilization, Roman culture, and Christianity, and which—at least according to Isidore—far outdid any expectations. The story of Scandinavian origins, which is the second variant, is not necessarily connected to the people of Gog and Magog, but also happens on its own, as with the Lombards or the Normans.[43]

The third way of placing the origin in a meaningful context was to insert the *gens* into Roman history. The most natural point of departure was to make the best of the migration history of the Romans themselves and to go back and, in a similar way to inflating the family tree of Noah, expanding the family tree of Priam and inventing additional Trojans who could be the name-giving heroes of other *gentes*.[44] In the Frankish Fredegar chronicle, the family tree of Priam is enlarged to encompass Phrygas for the Phrygians, Torcoth for the Turks, and Francio for the Franks.[45] In some cases—and this is the fourth option—we suspect that the author of an origin story did not make use of his classical or

41 Coumert, *Origines*, pp. 41–42; pp. 110–12; pp. 188–92.

42 On this cf. Erica Buchberger, S*hifting Ethnic Identities in Spain and Gaul, 500–700: From Romans to Goths and Franks*, Late Antique and Early Medieval Iberia (Amsterdam, 2017), esp. pp. 45–51.

43 *Origo gentis Langobardorum*, ed. Annalisa Bracciotti, Biblioteca di Cultura Romanobarbarica diretta da Bruno Luiselli 2 (Rome, 1998), 1:105; Paulus Diaconus, *Historia Langobardorum*, 1.1, pp. 52–53; Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae Ducum*, ed. Jules Lair, Mémoires de la societé des antiquaires de Normandie 23. Série 3.2 (Caen, 1865), 1.1, p. 129; Dudo of Saint-Quentin, *History of the Normans*, trans. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 15.

44 On the Trojan origin cf. Plassmann, "Herkunfts- und Ursprungsvorstellungen," pp. 359–60; Kordula Wolf, *Troja – Metamorphosen eines Mythos: Französische, englische und italienische Überlieferungen des 12. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich*, Europa im Mittelalter 13 (Berlin, 2009) and Michael Clarke in this volume.

45 Fredegar, *Chronicon*, ed. Bruno Krusch, in MGH SS rer Merov 2 (Hannover, 1888), pp. 1–193, 2.4 and 5, pp. 45–46. On this cf. Eugen Ewig, "Trojamythos und fränkische Frühgeschichte," in *Die Franken und die Alemannen bis zur "Schlacht bei Zülpich" (496/497)*, ed. Dieter Geuenich, Reallexikon der Germanischen Altertumskunde. Ergänzungsbände 19 (Berlin, 1998), pp. 1–30. Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 151–55; Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity*, pp. 168–72.

biblical training, but of oral traditions or at least traditions inherent to the *gens*. When Bede wrote his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* he located the origin of the Saxons in Saxony in Germany. In addition, he told the story about Pope Gregory the Great interpreting the name of the *Angli* in salvational terms as *Angeli* upon encountering a group of them in Rome. The fact of the descent of the *Angli* and *Saxones* of Bede's time from the Continent might have been too well known to just ignore it, but for Bede this was also not necessary, because the Angles' own tradition provided his Northumbrian Angles with such a fitting and meaningful place in the history of salvation. With the salvational twist of pushing the Angles' origin to the fore, Bede set the path for the *Angli* as the name used for identification.[46] We have thus biblical, Scandinavian, Roman, and orally transmitted origins, as well as several combinations.

What is the purpose of these variations on the theme of 'origin'? Does the choice of origin precipitate the function of the origin story? Can we deduce function from the form of origin? For example, does a mythical connection to the Romans and the link to the Trojan past mean that the *gens* in question emulated the Romans and tried to copy them? Did claiming an origin in a distant place and connected with a group apparently contrasting with the chosen people—such as the Gothic Gog and Magog variant—mean that the *gens* in question identified itself in opposition to the Romans? I would argue that the logic of the diverse story arcs leads us to another conclusion altogether. While the Goths started at a point which was as far as possible from the Romans and the chosen people, their story carried them closer and closer to *Romanitas* and *Christianitas*. The opposites attract each other until they merge. The story of the Goths is an arc of redemption, an upward arc that in the end transforms them into their model. It is interesting that the Goths in Italy and in Gaul and Spain—at least as far as we can find evidence—did not legitimize themselves by juxtaposition to the Romans, but by emulation. King Theoderic of Italy went to the Roman theatre and had himself called Flavius.[47] King Euric of Gaul passed laws in the tradition of Roman emperors.[48] And the Visigothic kings in Spain convened synods like the Roman emperors had done.[49] When they finally embraced the Catholic faith, their long journey towards civilization

46 Beda, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, ed. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, Oxford Medieval Texts (Oxford, 1969), 2.1, p. 132. Cf. Plassmann, *Origo gentis*, pp. 64–72.

47 On Theoderic cf. most recently Wiemer, *Theoderich*, especially pp. 232–58.

48 On Euric cf. Sabine Panzram, "Eurich und seine Nachfolger," in *Sie schufen Europa: Historische Portraits von Konstantin bis Karl dem Großen*, ed. Mischa Meier (Munich, 2007), pp. 124–40, at p. 127.

49 Wolfram, *Römerreich und seine Germanen*, pp. 376–80 on the imperial tradition in the Visigothic kingdom.

came to an end—at least as Isidore saw it—and they became worthy heirs of the Romans.[50] The Franks, on the other hand, who in their myth started as close relatives of the Romans due to their Trojan ancestry, were given another arc. Theirs encompasses emancipation from the relative who in the beginning is more powerful, but who in the end is overcome by the man who was once a child and is now sufficiently powerful to stand on his own and to defend his independence against the overbearing relative.

It is not the origin per se, nor the chosen variant that gives us hints about a possible function of the *origo gentis*. It is the story arc that shows if its purpose was emulation or independence. While emulation reiterated the *Romanitas* and made the *gens* a model heir, the independence arc made the *gens* the even more suitable heir to *Romanitas* in a twist, because the new *gens* surpassed the Romans and left their faults and mistakes behind. All in all, each and every *gens* somehow made a statement on their connection to the Romans. To ignore the Roman background against which the 'ethnogenesis,' or rather the 'ethnopoiesis' of the barbarian peoples happened is simply impossible. The common ground of the origin stories is to be found in the similar situation the barbarian *gentes* faced during the transformation of the Roman world that elicited similar methods for satisfying the need for identity and legitimacy. It is not any common 'Germanic' characteristic.

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50 On this cf. Buchberger, *Shifting Ethnic Identities*, pp. 45–51 and pp. 78–79.

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CHAPTER 18

Myth, Memory, and the Early History of the Diocese of Tours in Gregory's *Decem libri historiarum*

Andrew Rabin

Consisting largely of excerpts from the works of Eusebius, Jerome, and Orosius, the first book of Gregory of Tours's *Decem libri historiarum* has attracted less scholarly attention than his accounts of more recent events.[1] This neglect is rather surprising given the popularity of the first book among Gregory's contemporaries. Indeed, the most frequently copied portion of the *Decem libri* was the first book's final chapter, 1.48, which not only circulated independently—perhaps as grist for homilies—but also as part of a collection of Gregorian excerpts commonly known (after their subject) as the *Martinellus*.[2] Such strong interest in the chapter may be owed in part to its idiosyncratic content:

1 Fuller discussions of Gregory's career and the scholarship on the *Decem libri*, see Martin Heinzelmann, *Gregory of Tours: History and Society in the Sixth Century*, trans. Christopher Carroll (Cambridge, 2001); Edward James, ed., *The Franks*, The Peoples of Europe (Oxford, 1988), pp. 14–19; Allen E. Jones, *Social Mobility in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 51–73; Ian Wood, *Gregory of Tours* (Bangor, 1994). Walter Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History* (*A.D. 500–800*) (Princeton, 1988), pp. 112–234; Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood, eds., *The World of Gregory of Tours* (Leiden, 2002), esp. pp. 1–28; Adrian H.B. Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority in Sixth-Century Gaul: The Histories of Gregory of Tours Interpreted in Their Historical Context* (Göttingen: 1994). On Book I, see Helmut Reimitz, *History, Frankish Identity and the Framing of Western Ethnicity, 550–850*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 27–28, 45, 199; Kathleen Mitchell, "Marking the Bounds: The Distant Past in Gregory's History," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 294–306.

2 John Contreni, "Reading Gregory of Tours in the Middle Ages," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 294–306, 424; Paul Lehmann, "Mittelalterliche Büchertitel," in *Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 5 vols (Stuttgart, 1959–62), 5:59–60; Pascale Bourgain and Martin Heinzelmann, "L'œuvre de Grégoire de Tours: La diffusion des manuscrits," in *Grégoire de Tours et l'espace Gaulois: Actes du congrès international* (*Tours, 3–5 Novembre 1994*), ed. Nancy Gauthier and Henri Galinié, Supplément à la Revue archéologique du centre de la France (Tours, 1997), pp. 291–94, 309–10; Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 80–81; Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 146; Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 192 n. 18. Two of the very few to comment on the theft of Martin's corpse in 1.48 in particular are Raymond Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles in Late Antique Gaul* (Princeton, 1993), pp. 13–14; Rutger Kramer and Veronika Wieser, "You Only Die Twice? Abbots between Community and Empire: The Cases of Martin of Tours and Benedict of

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an otherwise unattested account of the death of St Martin of Tours and the subsequent dispute over his remains. Martin's life had been recounted in chapters 1.36, 1.39, and 1.43, all of which reflect the *Decem libri*'s primary sources: the *Vita sancti Martini*, *epistolae*, and *Dialogi* of Sulpicius Severus; the verse *vita* by Paulinus of Périgueux; and the works of Gregory's friend Venantius Fortunatus.[3] These latter, as well as Gregory's own life of the saint composed several years later, depict Martin's death in a manner typical of contemporary hagiography—accompanied by the singing of angels and marked by unusual weather events, along with other *miracula* signifying the dead man's saintliness.[4] The narrative in the *Decem libri*, however, depicts Martin's death less as a crux in the broader arc of Christian history than as an episode in the more mundane realm of regional politics. According to 1.48, Martin died in the small village of Candes while resolving a local dispute. Citizens of Poitiers then seized the body and attempted to claim Martin's relics for their own cathedral.

Aniane," *Hortus artium medievalium: Journal of the International Research Center for Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* 23, no. 2 (2017), 545–55.

3 Sulpicius does not recount Martin's death in his *vita* as the saint was still alive when he wrote. He does, however, provide a detailed account of Martin's passing in his *Dialogi*, as well as in letters to Eusebius, the deacon Aurelius, and his mother-in-law Bassula. Both *vita* and letters have been edited in Kurt Smolak, ed., *Sulpicius Severus: Leben des Heiligen Martin* (*Vita Sancti Martini*) (Eisenstadt, 1997), the latter at pp. 116–63. The *Dialogi* have been edited in Jacques Fontaine, ed., *Sulpice Sévère. Gallus: Dialogues sur les "vertus" de saint Martin* (Paris, 2006). On Sulpicius Severus as Gregory's source, see Clare Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer: History and Miracle in Sulpicius Severus*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford, 1983), pp. 115–19; Raymond Van Dam, "Images of Saint Martin in Late Roman and Merovingian Gaul," *Viator* 19 (1988), 1–27. On the letters, see Zachary Yuzwa, "Reading Genre in Sulpicius Severus' *Letters*," *Journal of Late Antiquity* 7, no. 2 (2014), 329–50. Gregory's own *Virtutes sancti* Martini has been edited in Giselle de Nie, ed., *Gregory of Tours: Lives and Miracles*, vol. 39, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 421–856. All quotations from the *Vita* will be taken from this text, although the translations are my own. The other non-Gregorian accounts of Martin's death can be found in Paulinus of Périgueux, *De vita sancti Martini episcopi*, in *Poetae Christiani minores*, ed. Michael Petschenig (Milan, 1888), pp. 16–159; Solange Quesnel, ed. and trans., *Vita sancti Martini*, in *Venance Fortunat: Oeuvres*, vol. 4, *Vie de saint Martin* (Paris: 1996). On these texts and their relation to Gregory and Sulpicius, see Bonnie Effros, *Caring for Body and Soul: Burial and the Afterlife in the Merovingian World* (University Park, 2002), p. 174; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, Oxford History of the Christian Church (Oxford, 1983), pp. 5–6, 83–84; Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 54–56; Ian Wood, "The Individuality of Gregory of Tours," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood (Leiden, 2002), pp. 35–36; Raymond Van Dam, "Paulinus of Périgueux and Perpetuus of Tours," *Francia* 14 (1986), 567–73; Allan Scott McKinley, "The First Two Centuries of Saint Martin of Tours," *Early Medieval Europe* 14, no. 2 (2006), 173–200.

4 See, for instance, Sulpicius, *epistola III*; Sulpicius *Dialogi* 3.7.1–2; Venantius Fortunatus, *Vita sancti Martini* 4.191–94; and Gregory, *Virtutes sancti Martini* 1.3–4.

After an argument with representatives from Tours over which city had the greater right to the saint, the Poitevins locked Martin's corpse in a room and set guards with the intention of removing the body in the morning. Overnight, however, with the guards asleep, the Tourangeaux "adpraehensam sanctissimi corporis glebam, alii per fenestram eiciunt, alii a foris suscipiunt" (took the clay of that most holy body and some handed it through the window while others were outside to receive it).[5]

Gregory's repeated references to the local affairs of Tours and its surrounding communities in the closing chapters of the first book suggest that he intended 1.48 to serve a double function: first, it was to be a transition from the world history that begins the *Decem libri* to the regional focus that occupied the remainder of the text; and second, it was to provide an origin story for Tours's special dedication to St Martin. Yet Gregory's narrative does not to fit comfortably into either of these roles. At first glance, the rivalry between Tours and Poitiers, important as it may have been for their respective citizenry, appears rather provincial, perhaps even petty, when compared to the biblical history that precedes it. Moreover, although so-called *furta sacra* narratives achieved wide popularity across Europe during this period, 1.48 lacks many of the features most characteristic of the genre: the theft is carried out by laymen rather than clergy; it is preceded by a debate over which city could demonstrate a clear right of possession, thus reducing a question of significant spiritual consequence to a matter of local competition; and perhaps most importantly, it takes place without the sanction of the saint himself.[6] Although other *furta sacra* narratives typically justify the removal of relics by claiming that the saint authorized the theft through a vision or other miraculous sign, nothing of the sort is recorded here. Indeed, Gregory's explicit condemnation of such thefts later in the *Decem libri* makes the narrative in 1.48 all the more curious.[7] Taken together, these inconsistencies invite the reader to ask why Gregory included the theft of Martin's remains in the *Decem libri* and accorded it such

5 All quotations from the *Decem libri* (henceforth *DLH*) are taken from Bruno Krusch and Rudolf Buchner, eds., *Gregorii episcopi Turonensis: Historiarum libri decem*, 2 vols (Darmstadt, 1956). Unless otherwise specified, translations are my own.

6 On the qualities of a *furta sacra* narrative, see Patrick J. Geary, *"Furta sacra": Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1978), see esp. pp. 56–129. On the "impossibility of stealing a relic without the permission of the saint," see Geary, *Furta sacra*, p. 113. This point is also discussed in Heinrich Fichtenau, "Zum Reliquienwesen im Früheren Mittelalter," *Mitteilungen des Institutes für österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 60 (1952), 73. It may be significant in this context that although Geary discusses Gregory's attitude towards relic theft, the events of 1.48 are nonetheless omitted from Geary's handlist of such narratives. See Geary, *Furta sacra*, pp. 149–57.

7 *DLH* 7.31. See also Geary, *Furta sacra*, p. 111.

a prominent place. If 1.48 was intended to serve as an origin story explaining Martin's special patronage of Tours, just what kind of origin was this narrative intended to provide?

The questions generated by Gregory's unusual account of Martin's remains make 1.48 a useful case study in the types of negotiations early medieval authors undertook to reconcile local traditions with Christian history. The story of Martin's *furta sacra* provided an origin myth that justified Tours's status as a site of pilgrimage and confirmed its identity as a diocese specially blessed by its patron saint. In focusing on the dispute over Martin's body, this chapter will examine how local history and regional disputes came to be remade as origin narratives designed to define a community's identity and grant it a privileged place in the larger arc of Christian history. For Gregory and his audience, the dispute between Tours and Poitiers encapsulated both theological concerns regarding the relationship between communities and their saints and the equally important recognition of the secular benefits associated with a shrine's prominence as a site of pilgrimage. Put differently, where earlier narratives were composed to promote Martin's reputation among the cadre of saints, Gregory's account of the theft of his corpse served to promote the reputation of Tours in early Merovingian Francia.

1 The *Decem libri* as *Origo Turonensis*

The extent to which Gregory understood the *Decem libri* to be a text concerned with origins remains subject to debate.[8] The text was certainly viewed as such by his later readers, among whom it came to be known as the *Historia Francorum* or *Historia gentis Francorum*, titles unattested prior to the 8th century.[9] Yet there is little evidence that Gregory viewed his text in this way.[10] If the *Decem libri* was intended primarily as an *origo Francorum*, it is striking that Gregory's first mention of the Franks does not occur until 2.7 and he provides no account of their origins until 2.9.[11] Indeed, for Gregory the *Decem libri* is not a history

8 Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 82; Van Dam, "Images of Saint Martin," pp. 13–15; Helmut Reimitz, "The Early Medieval Editions of Gregory of Tours' *Histories*," in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, ed. Alexander Callander Murray (Leiden, 2015), pp. 519–65.

9 Reimitz, "Early Medieval Editions," pp. 552–54; ibid.

10 Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 78–79, 82.

11 The difference between Gregory's account of the Franks' origin and that of other authors has been discussed in Patrick J. Geary, *Before France and Germany: The Creation and Transformation of the Merovingian World* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 77–78; Ian Wood, *The*

of *Francia* (a term which occurs a mere five times in the text) but of *Gallia*, a name that hearkens back to the region's tribal and Roman roots rather than to its present identity as a Frankish kingdom.[12] Helmut Reimitz argues that this apparent reluctance to turn the *Decem libri* into some sort of *origo gentis* reflects an underlying tension between Gregory's recognition of the diverse communities that occupied *Gallia* and his desire to subsume those communities under a single Christian identity. In Reimitz's words,

> In writing a new Church history, [Gregory] offered a powerful social framework for a number of differing social groupings … But Gregory did not want to provide contemporary individuals and groups with a past that could legitimate their positions as independent from his history of pastoral power.[13]

The difficulty this tension presented to Gregory is indicated in his own account of his work. Unlike later historians such as Bede or Paul the Deacon—both of whom open their *historiae* with allusions to the biblical concept of certain peoples as 'chosen' as a means of claiming divine sanction for these peoples and the land they had come to inherit[14]—Gregory begins the *Decem libri* with a profession of faith and a history of the world since the Creation, yet without a specific account of how the peoples occupying *Gallia* emerged as distinct cultures or societies. Instead, he describes his text as a history of "bella regum cum gentibus adversis, martyrum cum paganis, ecclesiarum cum hereticis" (the wars of kings against hostile peoples, of martyrs against heathens, and churches against heretics) and later as a means of comparing "quae christianis beatam confitentibus Trinitatem prospera successerint et quae hereticis eandem scidentibus fuerint in ruinam" (the success of those Christians who have believed in the Holy Trinity and the ruin of those who have tried to destroy it).[15] In other words, Gregory has not composed the *Decem libri* to provide an *origo*

Merovingian Kingdoms, 450–751 (New York, 1994), pp. 33–34; Reimitz, "Early Medieval Editions," p. 554. It should perhaps be noted in this context that Gregory's translators have had as much trouble dealing with the Franks' origins as did his medieval readers. In 2.19 (p. 120) of Lewis Thorpe's translation of the *Decem libri*, he has Gregory cite the historian "Valentinus" as one of his sources. Unfortunately, though, this "Valentinus" never existed! It was the result of a scribal error (switching *ullatinus* to *valentinus*) that had not been caught in the edition he used as his base text. Reimitz, "Early Medieval Editions," p. 550.

12 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, pp. 62–63.

13 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 52. See also p. 128.

14 See Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* 1.1 and Paul the Deacon, *Historia Langobardorum* 1.1.

15 *DLH* 1.pr. and 3.pr.

gentis—indeed, Reimitz refers to it as an "anti-*origo*"[16]—but instead to be a history of how the Church came to be established as spiritual authority over the peoples of *Gallia*, notwithstanding how those peoples came to be or what differences might distinguish them from each other.

This emphasis on ecclesiastical history explains in part the *Decem libri*'s regional focus. Even before the Franks enter his narrative, Gregory has already mapped out the geography of *Gallia*, not in topographical features but in urban centres. As S.T. Loseby observes, "The world described by Gregory of Tours is a world of cities."[17] The depictions of Britain and northern Italy as Eden-like paradises found in the *historiae* of Bede and Paul the Deacon here give way to a political geography, one centred especially on the triangle created by the urban dioceses of Tours, Poitiers, and Clermont.[18] Over the course of Book I, Gregory intersperses his borrowings from Eusebius, Jerome, and Orosius with accounts of the development of ecclesiastical institutions in the Clermont-Poitiers-Tours triangle, thus highlighting the place of these dioceses within the broader history of the Church Triumphant.[19] He recounts the foundation of the see of Clermont (1.30), its episcopal succession (1.44–46), and the saints whose shrines are to be found there (1.30, 1.32, 1.33, 1.45, and 1.46). His references to Poitiers are less numerous (perhaps unsurprising, given the competition between Tours and Poitiers),[20] though he does recount the deeds of St Hilary, the town's most prominent saint and, of no less importance, its first bishop for whom solid historical evidence survives (1.38–39). Predictably, Tours receives the most complete treatment, with accounts of the foundation of its diocese and first bishop (1.30), the life of its patron saint (1.39, 1.43, and 1.48), and an explanation for the disruption in its episcopal succession (1.48). What is striking about these references, though, is that Gregory never describes either the towns or churches of three cities as sites of particular sacredness. While he does mention the major miracles performed by their patron saints, for the most

16 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, pp. 52–57.

17 S.T. Loseby, "Gregory's Cities: Urban Functions in Sixth-Century Gaul," in *Franks and Alamanni in the Merovingian Period: An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. Ian Wood (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 240. On the urban focus of Gregory and his contemporaries, see Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200–1000* (Oxford, 2003), p. 154; Wallace-Hadrill, *The Frankish Church*, p. 49; Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 225.

18 Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 193–94 On the regionalism of the *Decem librum*, see Jamie Kreiner, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought (Cambridge, 2014), p. 167.

19 See Loseby, "Gregory's Cities," p. 252; Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 146–47.

20 See below, xxx.

part these miracles are not recounted with any degree of precision.[21] For such stories, he writes, the reader should consult instead his "Book of Miracles."[22] Directions of this sort explicitly distinguish the matter of the *Decem libri* from the matter of *miracula* or *vitae sanctorum*. Without dismissing the spiritual or the miraculous, Gregory instead focuses on the Church's growth as an urban institution inextricably linked to the rise of the major cities of the region. The history of this growth establishes a framework within which the earthly events he records can be positioned while also situating the Gallic church within a Christian society. The relationship between these different 'levels' of history is made clear at the end of the *Decem libri*. Gregory concludes his text with a list of the bishops of Tours followed by a short chronicle that begins with the length of time from the Creation to the Flood and ends with the span of years between the death of St Martin and the present.[23] Recalling the balance between regional and global history in Book I, it can be no coincidence that this last age coincides exactly with Tours's assumption of its particular identity as the city of St Martin as recounted in 1.48.

Yet if Gregory's focus on the Clermont-Poitiers-Tours triangle supplied his narrative with a degree of geographical coherence, it also implicated the *Decem libri* in what were often bitter regional rivalries, particularly between Tours and Poitiers.[24] Indeed, the theft of Martin's remains was only one instance in the long-standing enmity between the two cities. Because of their proximity to one another, Poitiers and Tours often found themselves competing for reputation, royal favour, and the profits to be gained from trade and religious pilgrimage. Prior to the 4th century, Poitiers's wealth and numerous saints' shrines gave it a considerable advantage over its more provincial neighbour. Located in the gap between the Massif Armoricain and Massif Central mountain ranges, it benefited both as a site of strategic importance and as a necessary stop on trade routes between south-west and north-east Gaul. By the 4th century, these advantages led to it becoming capital of the province of Poitou while the prominence of Bishop (later Saint) Hilary of Poitiers had

21 See, for instance, the somewhat cursory recounting of Martin's career in 1.39.

22 See, for instance, the end of *DLH* 1.47: "Meminimus de his in libro Miraculorum" (I recount this in my *Book of Miracles*).

23 Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 165.

24 See Loseby, "Gregory's Cities," p. 241; Raymond Van Dam, *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Berkeley, 1985), p. 234. On the rivalry between religious communities in particular, see Geary, *Furta sacra*, p. 58; Albrecht Diem, "Gregory's Chess Board: Monastic Conflict and Competition in Early Medieval Gaul," in *Compétition et sacré au Haut Moyen Âge: entre médiation et exclusion*, ed. Philippe Depreux, François Bougard, and Régine Le Jan (Turnhout, 215), pp. 165–91.

made the town a major site of Christian devotion as well.[25] In contrast, Tours lagged in both wealth and prestige. Ian Wood has described early Tours as "a place lacking in importance: it was not even a provincial capital … And after it became the center of a province it still remained small and insignificant."[26] As late as the 8th century, Alcuin (then bishop of Tours) could refer to Poitiers as "fecunda" (prosperous) while describing Tours as "parvula et despectibilis" (unimportant and not worthy of respect).[27] This "competitive localism," to use Sharon Farmer's phrase, was not merely a matter of civic identity: it was a critical feature of the community's religious life as well.[28] The prestige of a saint not only attracted income from pilgrims but also provided the town fathers with regional, at times even kingdom-wide, political influence. For Gregory and his contemporaries, just as a powerful religious foundation could impact royal taxation and local land tenure here on earth, so a powerful patron saint could better advocate for his flock in the kingdom of heaven.[29]

The need to overtly align himself with Tours within this rivalry was especially important to Gregory, perhaps even more so than it had been for previous holders of the diocese. Gregory descended from a powerful Gallo-Roman family with influence throughout the region, including Tours where several of his relatives had preceded him as bishop.[30] Gregory himself, however, had spent the majority of his career as a cleric in Clermont, the home of his father's family. Accordingly, he was hardly an obvious candidate for the Tours bishopric when it fell open in 573. Not only had he spent little time there, but hostility between his family and others in the region had already caused him to be passed over for bishoprics in Lyon, Langres, and his home diocese of Clermont. Moreover, the presence of a more likely candidate in the person of Riculf, archdeacon to the late Bishop Eufronius, made it improbable that he would receive the support of either church or town.[31] Indeed, he likely owed his appointment to King Sigibert, for whom a loyal bishop would be useful in tightening

25 Yitzhak Hen, *Culture and Religion in Merovingian Gaul: A.D. 481–751*, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions (Leiden, 1995), pp. 100–01.

26 Wood, "Individuality," p. 36. See also Van Dam, *Leadership*, p. 125; Shannon Farmer, *Communities of Saint Martin: Legend and Ritual in Medieval Tours* (Ithaca, 1991), pp. 11–64.

27 Alcuin, *Homilia de natali sancti Willibrodi*, in J.P. Migne, ed. *Patrologia Latina*, 101:711.

28 Farmer, *Communities*, p. 26.

29 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 29; James, pp. 192–93.

30 *DLH* 10.31. See also Reimitz, "Early Medieval Editions," pp. 519–30; Geary, *Before France and Germany*, p. 28.

31 Gregory recounts his dispute with Riculf in 5.49. See also Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 23; Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 34; Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 63; Wood, "Individuality," p. 44.

his control over the region.[32] The fact that Gregory's consecration took place at Rheims rather than Tours itself—a violation of canonical rule—suggests at least some local resentment over his appointment.[33] Not surprisingly, Gregory's early years as bishop proved controversial: not only did he have to confront a series of slanderous accusations by the disappointed Riculf in hopes of displacing him, but he also was faced with claims by Bishop Felix of Nantes that his family had been involved in the assassination of Bishop-elect Sylvester of Langres (the cleric chosen over Gregory the previous year).[34] The bitterness between the parties was such that his adversaries (in what was doubtless an attempt to blacken his reputation) even suborned some of his friends to recommend that Gregory flee to his family home in Clermont, taking the treasury of Tours Cathedral with him, a recommendation he wisely chose to disregard.[35] Ultimately, Gregory was cleared of all charges at an episcopal synod convened by the king, but he nonetheless spent the first years of his episcopacy under a shadow of suspicion concerning both the legitimacy of his appointment and the depth of his loyalty to his new see.

In composing his history, Gregory was thus faced with a series of tensions—institutional, communal, and personal—that influenced the development of the *Decem libri*, particularly its opening books. Read within this context, 1.48 appears designed to supply an origin narrative securing the place of local tradition within Christian history, the preeminence of Tours within Gallic Francia, and his own legitimacy as guardian of Martin's legacy. Yet if these tensions provide the narrative's context, closer consideration of the chapter itself sheds slight on the rhetorical strategies that enabled Gregory to bring these issues to the fore. More than just a partisan contribution to a long-standing communal rivalry or an early example of a *furta sacra* narrative, 1.48 is designed to establish identities for Tours, its patron saint, and its bishop that would be central to Gregory's conception of the *Decem libri* as a whole.

2 The *Decem libri* as *Origo Martini et Gregorii*

The significance of 1.48, both to the *Decem libri* and to Gregory's conception of history more broadly, is indicated by the transition it provides between biblical history and present politics. In contrast to the other books, nearly all of which

32 Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 64; Wood, "Individuality," p. 43.

33 Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 33; Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 64.

34 Wood, "Individuality," pp. 40–41, 44.

35 *DLH* 5.49.

end with a simple *explicit*, Book I concludes with an abbreviated chronology: "A passione ergo Domini usque transitum sanct Martini anni 412 conpotantur" (From the Passion of our Lord until the death of Saint Martin four hundred and twelve years passed). This is followed by an *explicit* reading, "Explicit liber primus, continens annos 5596, qui conpotantur a principio usque ad transitum sancti Martini episcopi" (Here concludes the first book, which covers five thousand, five hundred and ninety-six years from the Creation until the death of Saint Martin the bishop).[36] The effect of this elaborate closing passage is to impose a strict distinction between the first book and all that comes after. In part, this distinction reflects Gregory's transition to more modern history: while the first book covers nearly 6,000 years, no subsequent book concerns more than 112 (Book 11) and the final five taken together comprise just 16. Martin's death here becomes the fixed point by which historical time is measured, whether that time is the 412 years since Christ's Passion or the 5,596 years since the Creation.[37] Condensing so much time into a single book reflects Gregory's stated aim to turn from the past in order to compose a *historia* of "gesta praesentia" (the events of today);[38] however, as in the chronicle that concludes the *Decem libri*, Gregory's "today" begins only at the moment when the acquisition of Martin's relics elevates Tours from a provincial town to a place of pilgrimage. As Gregory's medieval readers would likely have recognized, framing Martin's death in this fashion recalls the transition between books six and seven of Orosius's *Historiae adversos paganos*, in which the turn from old to new corresponds with the Passion and resurrection of Christ.[39] This characterization of Martin's death as both a transitional moment of world historical significance recalling the death of Christ and a critical event in the life of his community anticipates the conclusion of the *Decem libri*'s subsequent books, nearly all of which end with the death of a king.[40] The implicit comparison with the end of Book I highlights the distinction between the royal deaths, which reflect only a transition of secular power, and the passing of Martin, which marks the changing of an age as well as a crucial episode in the extension of the Church's authority over the whole of *Gallia*. In essence, the life and death of Tours's patron saint thus becomes—like Orosius's Christ—the fulcrum upon which Gregory's history rests.

36 *DLH* 1.48.
37 Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 165, 291.
38 See also Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 108; Jones, *Social Mobility*, p. 56.
39 On this point, see also Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 108.
40 Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 299.

Gregory foreshadows this importance with the account of Martin's death that begins at 1.48. According to Gregory,

> Arcadi vero et Honori secondo imperii anno sanctus Martinus Turonorum episcopus, plenus virtutibus et sanctitate, praebens infirmis multa beneficia, octuagismo et primo aetatis suae anno, episcopatum autem vicissimo sexto, apud Condatinsem diocis suae vicum excedens a saeculo, filiciter migravit ad Cristum. Transiit autm media nocte, quae dominica habebatur, Attico Caesarioque consolibus.
>
> In the second year of the reign of Arcadius and Honorius, Saint Martin, Bishop of Tours, full of virtue and sanctity, who had been of such benefit to the sick, died in Candes, a village in his own diocese, in the eighty-first year of his age and the twenty-sixth year of his episcopate, and so went happily to Christ. He died in the middle of the night on a Sunday, during the consulship of Atticus and Caesarius.

In describing Martin's passing, Gregory pays unusual attention to the time at which the saint's death occurred. In a text that typically marks time with only the vaguest of references, this degree of meticulousness stands out. Indeed, nowhere else in the *Decem libri* does Gregory date an event with such precision.[41] By way of comparison, the birth of Christ is simply recorded as having taken place "anno XLIII imperii Agusti" (in the forty-fourth year of the reign of Augustus) while the year of his crucifixion is not identified at all.[42] Lyon was founded in the nineteenth year of Augustus's reign, but the founding of Tours goes unmentioned.[43] Gregory lists the entire episcopal succession of Clermont, but the dates of succession, length of episcopacies, and ages of the bishops are largely omitted. Gregory may have composed the *Decem libri* as a *historia*, yet for the most part the dating and chronology of events can be understood only according to the internal logic of the text. In departing from this practice, Gregory uses chronological precision to highlight the magnitude of Martin's death by naming the emperors and consuls of both the eastern and western empire, its local import by listing the length of his episcopate, and even its individual significance by specifying his age at death. Perhaps most important, though, is Gregory's claim that Martin died at midnight on

41 Stancliffe, *St. Martin and His Hagiographer*, pp. 116–17; Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, pp. 143–44, 184.

42 *DLH* 1.19.

43 *DLH* 1.18.

a Sunday, both a time and a day identified with Christ's resurrection.[44] The saint's passing from the earthly to the spiritual life at midnight links Martin with the allegorical bridegroom (that is, the returning Christ) of Matthew 25:6 while a Sunday coincides with the resurrection itself. Earlier in Book I, Gregory had argued that "dominicam vero resurrectionem dia prima facta …, non septimam" (the Sunday of the resurrection was the first day of the week, and not the seventh), maintaining that it is not only the day of Christ's resurrection but also the first day of Creation.[45] These associations allow Gregory to firmly fix Martin's death within both secular and spiritual temporalities, thereby laying the foundation for the broader historical claims at the chapter's end. If Martin's death is to be the moment at which the modern age begins and Tours assumes its spiritual identity, Gregory's specificity endows his account of Martin's death with a heightened degree of authority that enables it to stand as a certainty within both secular and Christian history.

Yet if the date and time of Martin's death are certain, the events that follow are tainted with ambiguity and dispute. Gregory writes that representatives from Poitiers and Tours gathered even before Martin's death to argue over which town had the right to his remains. According to the Poitevins, Martin had become monk and abbot in Poitiers, and although the people of Tours had benefited from his presence as bishop, his time there was a loan of sorts which now must be repaid. The Tourangeaux, on the other hand, claimed that Martin had died with unfinished business: he had raised two men from the dead in Poitiers but "maior ei virtus" (his sacred power) had diminished when he became bishop so that he raised only one in Tours. Accordingly, his remains should return to Tours so that he could complete his work. Moreover, they also pointed out that "virum sim us antiquitus institutus" (the practice founded by men of old) held that a bishop should be buried in the city of his consecration, which for Martin was Milan, and so neither city could truly claim an unambiguous right of possession.[46] The competing claims of Poitiers and Tours are, to say the very least, unconvincing: Poitiers bases its claim on having been Martin's home early in his career and then characterizes him as specie or chattel to be lent and returned; Tours argues that they deserve a number of miracles equal to that of Poitiers while conceding both that he was less able to perform miracles while in their city and that by custom neither city had full right to his corpse anyway. Gregory's reasons for framing the debate in these terms are unclear. Although one might expect him to attribute a more compelling set of

44 Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 147.

45 *DLH* 1.23.

46 On this point, see Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 169.

claims to his own diocese, he instead suggests that neither Tours nor Poitiers (nor Milan, *in absentia*) could demonstrate their claim beyond doubt or contention. Further, the fact that the argument is carried out by the laity of each city and that one side's claim comes down to little more than petty miracle-counting suggests that the stakes in the dispute reflect secular rivalries more than any sort of serious theological discussion. If the acquisition of Martin's relics represents a foundational moment in the history of Tours, then that foundation appears shaky indeed.

However, Gregory and his contemporaries may have been less troubled by the seeming weakness of Poitiers's and Tours's claims than the modern reader. As Geary points out, texts concerning disputes over relics at times acknowledged the equal legitimacy (or, as in this case, illegitimacy) of both parties' positions.[47] Likewise, relatively specious justifications similar to those found in the *Decem libri* were not uncommon.[48] In the case of Martin's relics, the fallaciousness of the arguments may even have been the point. Gregory viewed the history of his times as "mixte confusequae" (mixed up and confused), an age in which "virtutes sanctorum" (the holy deeds of the saints) stood in sharp contrast to "strages gentium" (the slaughter of whole peoples).[49] From this perspective, Gregory's scepticism that laymen—especially those so grasping as to begin arguing over the saint's remains even before his death—might reach a theologically sound resolution is perfectly justified. Simply put, it was not for the laity to determine the resting place for a saint's relics, a point Gregory emphasizes later in the *Decem libri* when he describes an attempt to steal the fingerbone of St Sergius as something that "non erat acceptum martyri" (was not acceptable to the martyr) and took place "non … cum gratia martyris" (without the martyr's approval).[50] The fact that the motivation for the theft was similar to the claims made in the dispute over Martin—the king Gundovald sought Sergius's finger because he had heard that another monarch possessed the saint's thumb—highlights the laity's fundamentally misguided perception of relics as little more than currency for transaction or means of enhancing status.

This context clarifies Gregory's reasons for portraying the theft of Martin's remains in the way that he does.[51] Because neither side could lay clear claim to the relics, Gregory was in the awkward position of having to reconcile two

47 Geary, *Furta sacra*, pp. 65–66.
48 Geary, *Furta sacra*, pp. 112–18.
49 *DLH* 2.pr.
50 *DLH* 7.31. See also Geary, *Furta sacra*, p. 111.
51 On the various justifications for relic theft, see Geary, *Furta sacra*, pp. 108–28.

conflicting perspectives, one which acknowledged the questionable circumstances in which the Tourangeaux acquired Martin's remains and another which celebrated Martin's enshrinement as the city's patron saint. Both of these perspectives are present in the *Decem libri*'s account of the theft. According to the narrative in 1.48, the argument between the men of Tours and Poitiers continued until sunset, at which time the corpse was moved to the middle of the room, the door locked, and the building placed under guard. By midnight, however, the Poitevins had all fallen asleep, giving the Tourangeaux the opportunity to pass the body out through the window and escape. The theft was only revealed when the Poitevins awoke to the Tourangeaux's chanting of Psalms as they sailed with Martin's remains up the Loire. In light of the specious claims offered by both sides during the day's arguments, the theft of Martin's corpse—at least as narrated here—seems difficult to justify. Certainly the image of the men of Tours awkwardly wrestling Martin's corpse out a window while surrounded by the sleeping men of Poitiers has a degree of partisan humour to it, but ultimately the theft differs little from the Poitevins' own plan to seize Martin's body the next morning.[52] Yet for Gregory, even if the motives of the Tourangeaux can be called into question, it does not follow that the theft of Martin's relics was necessarily improper. Although the men of Tours were not acting with the explicit sanction of either God or saint, the translation of Martin's remains nonetheless conformed to divine plan, for as Gregory writes "Deus omnipitens noluit urbem Turonicam a proprio frustrari patrono" (Almighty God would not permit the city of Tours to be cheated of its patron). This declaration is not simply an instance of retroactive justification; instead, it directs the reader's attention to the typological structure that gives form to Gregory's narrative.[53] The resonances between Martin and Christ highlight the former's role as a *typus* of the latter: for Gregory, Martin is a "novis lampadum" (new flame) whose death both echoes that of Christ and, from a structural perspective, serves much the same role as did the Passion in Orosius's *Historiae*.[54] Likewise, the actions of the Tourangeaux recall the circumstances of Martin's passing: both take place at midnight (*media nocte*), both are accompanied by "psallientum" (the singing of Psalms) and most importantly, both are framed

52 Gregory's sense of humour is rarely noted, but Lewis Thorpe does point out that there often seems to be a sense of humorous irony underlying his narration. See Lewis Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The History of the Franks*, Penguin Classics (New York, 1970), pp. 46–50.

53 Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, pp. 118, 131. Goffart, *The Narrators of Barbarian History*, pp. 157–58. Van Dam points out that "the miracles of Martin were thus not disruptions of the natural order, but demonstrations of the essential message of the Bible." Van Dam, *Leadership*, p. 132.

54 Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 108 and above, pp. xxx.

as a homecoming—Martin to Christ and his body to Tours. For Gregory, it is not necessary for the thieves to fully recognize the typological context of their actions; rather, the resonance between the translation of Martin's body and the circumstances of his death reveals the divine intelligence at work.

The events surrounding the acquisition of Martin's body had consequences both for the development of his cult at Tours and for the role of the bishop as the city's spiritual leader. In Tours, veneration of the saint omitted any reference to the manner in which the community received his relics. Far more important was the commemoration of his church, built by Gregory's predecessor Bishop Perpetuus to accommodate the growing number of pilgrims. According to Gregory, the saint's feast day had "triplici virtute pollet: id est dedication temple, translatione corporis sancti vel ordinati eius episcopate" (a threefold meaning: that is, the dedication of the shrine, the translation of the saint's body, and his ordination as a bishop).[55] Similarly, in his *Virtutes sancti Martini*, Gregory preserves some details from the *Decem libri*—Martin still dies at midnight on a Sunday at the age of 81 and in the twenty-sixth year of his episcopate[56]—but makes no mention of the subsequent dispute between Tours and Poitiers.[57] On the other hand, he dedicates an entire chapter to the building of Perpetuus's church.[58] The chapter culminates with the inability of the assembled bishops and abbots to move Martin's sarcophagus into the new church until an old man appears and cries to the clerics, "Usquequo conturbamini et tardatis? Non videtis domnum Martinum stantem vos iuvare paratum, si mannus apponitis?" (How long will you remain confused and dilly-dallying? Do you not see the lord Martin standing ready to help you if you put your hands to it?). It is only then, with the aid of the saint himself, that the sarcophagus can be translated to the newly built shrine.[59] Martin's miraculous appearance to aid in his own translation fills a role similar to that omitted from the account of his death in the *Decem libri*, that is, a holy vision granting divine sanction to the removal of the saint's body. In effect, the account of Martin's translation supplants that of the theft of his corpse. Martin's participation in the completion of his church confers legitimacy on Tours's possession of his relics in a way that the events of 1.48 cannot. In one sense, this episode participates in what Van Dam describes as the transition from "Martin to Saint Martin"—that

55 *DLH* 2.14. See also Geary, *Furta sacra*, p. 12; Van Dam, *Leadership*, pp. 137, 140.

56 *Virtutes sancti Martini* 1.3–4.

57 See also Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, p. 31.

58 *Virtutes sancti Martini* 1.6.

59 On this narrative, see Giselle de Nie, *Views from a Many Windowed Tower: Studies of Imagination in the Works of Gregory of Tours* (Amsterdam, 1987), p. 236.

is, from historical personage into divine miracle worker.[60] More directly, it reflects the distinction between the genres of *miracula* and *historiae*, a distinction of which Gregory was keenly aware.[61] Perhaps most importantly, though, it establishes Martin's cult firmly in Tours. If the crucial moment in Martin's veneration is the building of his church rather than the circumstances of his death, then neither Poitiers, Candes, nor Milan can claim his relics, patronage, and the donations of his worshippers.[62] The *Virtutes sancti Martini* thus creates an alternate origin for Tours's religious identity and cultic significance, one which circumvents the troubling implications of the *Decem libri*.

For Gregory, however, recounting the dispute over Martin's remains also offered a chance to highlight his own connections with the saint, thereby helping solidify his position as bishop. Gregory was well aware of the similarities between Martin's tenure as bishop and his own. Both were unlikely candidates for the bishopric of Tours and both encountered considerable resistance from the Cathedral clergy and the community.[63] Martin even had his own 'Riculf' in the form of his archdeacon Brictius (though the latter's bad behaviour did not prevent his accession as bishop of Tours nor his later elevation to sainthood).[64] Likewise, both found themselves in conflict with their fellow bishops, the latter challenging their worthiness to receive a bishopric.[65] For this reason, Gregory seized upon any opportunity to assert his legitimacy as Martin's successor and his suitability for the diocese of Tours.[66] For Gregory, this suitability was very much a family matter: as he eagerly pointed out, 13 of the 18 bishops of Tours had been his relatives.[67] Accordingly, Gregory had some right to claim a connection to his diocese even if he personally had little acquaintance with it prior to his appointment. He could thus also claim to be continuing what he saw as his family's traditional role as guardian of Martin's relics. This claim stood behind his decision to write the *Decem libri*, in which the appearance of

60 Van Dam, *Leadership*, p. 120.

61 See above, pp. xx. See also Breukelaar, *Historiography and Episcopal Authority*, p. 95.

62 Kreiner, *Social Life*, p. 167; Jones, *Social Mobility*, p. 167; Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, pp. 139–40.

63 *Leadership*, pp. 121, 24; Robert Bartlett, *Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things? Saints and Worshippers from the Martyrs to the Reformation* (Princeton, 2013), p. 18; Ralph W. Mathisen, *Ecclesiastical Factionalism in Late Antique Gaul* (Washington, D.C., 1989), p. 20. Brown, *Cult*, p. 101.

64 *DLH* 2.1.

65 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 34.

66 Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom*, pp. 159–60; Van Dam, *Saints and Their Miracles*, p. 65.

67 *DLH* 10.39. See also Reimitz, "Early Medieval Editions," pp. 519–20; Wood, "Individuality," pp. 36–37.

objectivity (especially in its first five books) became a means of framing recent historical events to his own and his family's advantage.

This is particularly true of the first books of the *Decem libri*, which, as Reimitz has pointed out, appear designed to "[lay] the ground for [Gregory's own] appearance in his *Histories*."[68] As a transitional chapter bridging past and present, 1.48 is particularly well placed to play a role in this project of self-fashioning. Aspects of the narrative, such as the claim by the Tourangeaux that Martin's relics should reside in Tours even though he was ordained and spent much of his career elsewhere, echo earlier complaints about both Martin and Gregory that their foreignness to Tours disqualified them from its bishopric.[69] More pointed, though, is Gregory's account of the Poitevins falling asleep so that "nec ullus superfluit qui ex hac multitudine vigilaret" (of them all no one remained to be on guard) and then returning home "nihil de thesauro quem custodiebant habentes" (having nothing of the treasure which they should have been guarding). The failure of the Poitevins here is not impiety, sloth, or simple laziness; rather, Gregory frames their error as one of guardianship. This is a concept particularly resonant for Gregory, whose self-chosen episcopal name derives from the Greek γρηγορεῖν, 'to guard or watch over.'[70] This is not to suggest that 1.48 should be read as little more than Gregorian propaganda. The text would not support such a reading, nor would it be in line with his compositional strategy in the *Decem libri*'s first five books as a whole. Rather, it is to say that Gregory took advantage of the dispute to craft a narrative with details relevant to his own history. Implicitly, if Martin is the *typus* of Christ, then Gregory is the *typus* (or so he hoped) of Martin.

Within the context of other early medieval origin myths, the story of the dispute over Martin's corpse seems somewhat less impressive than its Insular and Continental analogues. Simple cadaver theft can hardly be expected to match up with the Arthur of Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Patrick of Muirchu, or the Beowulf of Germanic epic. Nonetheless, 1.48 functions as an originary narrative on multiple levels: it marks the beginning of what Gregory viewed as the modern world; it recounts the means by which Tours acquired its patron saint and identifies that acquisition with the origin of the saint's formal veneration; and it provides Gregory with a historical precedent to support his claim to the episcopate. As such, it illustrates the means by which one community relied on a self-identified origin to establish its significance within Christian history

68 Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 27.

69 See above, pp. xxx.

70 On Gregory's self-conception as a 'guardian,' see Reimitz, *Frankish Identity*, p. 34; Farmer, *Communities*, p. 26. On his episcopal name, see Heinzelmann, *Gregory*, 32 n. 23.

and differentiate itself from its neighbours. Perhaps more importantly, it demonstrates the way in which a single event, even one as sordid as corpse theft, could be put to a variety of uses and fulfil a variety of needs. That being said, even Gregory could not have foreseen that the narrative in 1.48 would serve as the origin also of an altogether more modern and more secular phenomenon: the locked-room mystery.

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CHAPTER 19

Conclusion

Lindy Brady and Patrick Wadden

This volume has surveyed a range of origin stories from early medieval western Europe. Collectively, the contributors have traced how, from a shared corpus of biblical and late-antique material, more elaborate stories about the origins of *gentes* emerged in the early Middle Ages. The studies in this collection have examined the range of ways in which these origin tales were manipulated and recast by individual authors for a variety of political and cultural purposes, and how the collective identities reflected within them fluctuated with every new retelling. These chapters also reflect something of the diversity of approaches modern scholars take to the study of this material and the variety of opinions that exist regarding the origins of these narratives, their development, and the purposes they served. If, as we hope, this collection serves as a starting point for students and scholars interested in early medieval origin legends, then it is also important to acknowledge that it is concerned primarily with the earliest history of those narratives. This collection has focused largely on the early Middle Ages, when origin legends for many of the peoples of medieval Europe were first written down. The popularity of origin legends did not wane in the following centuries. Indeed, interest may be said to have expanded as old origin legends were copied and others were written down for the first time. At least in part, the continued interest in these narratives was related to the fact that they were almost endlessly adaptable. It is also the case that their character began to change in some fundamental ways as the Middle Ages progressed. Two brief case studies from the Insular world will serve to demonstrate these points.

The introduction began with a quotation from the Gaelic origin legend.[1] The earliest surviving versions of this narrative date to the 9th century, though it is clear from the content of some 7th-century poetry that key components of the legend were extant already at that date.[2] As a result of what was apparently a

1 See above, p. 1.

2 On the development of the legend, see R. Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar gabhála*. Part I: The Growth of the Text," *Ériu* 38 (1987), 81–142; idem, "*Leabhar gabhála*. Part II: The Growth of the Tradition," *Ériu* 39 (1988), 1–66. For recent assessments of the development of the legend, see John Carey, *A New Introduction to "Lebor Gabála Érenn": The Book of the Taking of Ireland*, Irish

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collaborative scholarly enterprise involving participants in ecclesiastical centres across the island, the 11th century witnessed the compilation of a 'canonical' account of the Gaelic origin legend in *Lebor gabála Érenn*, "The Book of the Taking of Ireland." *Lebor gabála* tells two stories: the first is the history of the Gaels from their Scythian origins through their migration to Spain and subsequent settlement of Ireland; the second is the history of the island of Ireland and the many waves of invaders who occupied it in succession.[3] The final 'taking' of Ireland was that by the Gaels, or *Scotti*, whose arrival thus represented the merging of these two stories. This event also marked the convergence of two identities, the one ethnic the other territorial; it was at that point, as a 14th-century Irish bardic poet put it, that the Gaels "became the men of Ireland."[4]

The origin legend enshrined in *Lebor gabála* was a central component and expression of Irish identity in the early medieval period, when the inhabitants of Ireland seem to have been linguistically and ethnically homogeneous.[5] The ethnic composition of the population of Ireland underwent a major shift in the 12th century, however, when the island was invaded by Anglo-Normans under Henry II of England. The incomplete nature of the English conquest meant that, for the following centuries, the island was inhabited by two distinct *gentes*, the Gaelic Irish and the English of Ireland. In this context, ethnicity became increasingly important; the distinction between ethnically Gaelic and English inhabitants of the island was enshrined in law, giving expressions of ethnic identity an immediate and practical relevance in people's lived lives.[6] Among the Gaels, *Lebor gabála* continued to hold a place of great symbolic significance as the definitive account of the origins and history of the people

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Texts Society Subsidiary Series 1 (London, 1993); and *"Lebor Gabála Érenn": Textual History and Pseudohistory*, ed. John Carey, Irish Texts Society Subsidiary Series 20 (London, 2009).

3 *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, ed. Macalister, 1:xxv-xxviii; Helen Fulton, "History and *historia*: The Uses of the Troy Story in Medieval Ireland and Wales," in *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative*, ed. Ralph O'Connor, Studies in Celtic History 34 (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 47–51. The following discussion of the history of *Lebor gabála* in the late medieval period draws extensively on Patrick Wadden, "History and Identity in Late Medieval Ireland: *Lebor gabála Érenn*, the Irish, and the English," in *Imagined Identities and Communities in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. Antoni Furió (forthcoming, 2022).

4 Gofraid Fionn Ó Dálaigh, *Filidh Éireann go haointeach*, § 37, ed. and trans. E. Knott, *Ériu* 5 (1911), 50–69, at pp. 62–63: "*Éireannaigh díbh go ndearna*."

5 On Irish identity in the early medieval period, see Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Nationality and Kingship in Pre-Norman Ireland," in *Nationality and the Pursuit of National Independence*, ed. T.W. Moody, Historical Studies 11 (Belfast, 1978), pp. 1–35; Thomas Charles-Edwards, "The Making of Nations in Britain and Ireland in the Early Middle Ages," in *Lordship and Learning: Studies in Memory of Trevor Aston*, ed. Ralph Evans (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 11–38, at 29–33.

6 For recent discussion, see Sparky Booker, *Cultural Exchange and Identity in Late Medieval Ireland: The English and Irish of the Four Obedient Shires* (Cambridge, 2018).

and their attachment to their homeland. The specific version quoted at the beginning of the introduction survives in the 15th-century manuscript known as the Book of Fermoy. But the scribe claimed to be copying from the Book of Druimm Snechtai, a manuscript that is no longer extant but seems to have been written in the 8th century.[7] The scribe of the Book of Fermoy was thus writing perhaps 700 years after the scribe of his source—he lived closer to our time than to that of the author of his early medieval exemplar. Numerous other copies of *Lebor gabála* survive in manuscripts of the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, evidence of continued engagement with the text.[8] The process of copying and integrating versions of *Lebor gabála Érenn* continued into the 17th century, when an attempt was made to produce something like an authoritative version from the numerous extant recensions.[9] Moreover, references to the Gaelic origin legend and the history of Ireland enshrined in *Lebor gabála* are also found in great abundance in other literary genres, including the bardic praise poetry so characteristic of the later Middle Ages in Ireland.[10] Evidently, the early medieval origin legend remained of interest to Gaelic scholars and their patrons throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. Rather than seeing this as a sign of conservatism on behalf of Irish scholars, we should acknowledge that their fondness for *Lebor gabála* reflected its continued relevance to their world and that of their patrons. In a society where ethnicity mattered a great deal, their origin legend remained a crucial expression of Gaelic Irish identity.

The English settler community in Ireland had its own origin story. This was the account of the 12th-century invasion recorded by Gerald of Wales in his *Expugnatio Hibernica*.[11] This work championed the inhabitants of the Welsh march—those of mixed Welsh and Norman ancestry, including Gerald's own

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7 The seminal discussion of the date and contents of this manuscript is Rudolf Thurneysen, "*Cín Dromma Snechtai*," in idem, *Zu Irischen Handscriften und Litteraturdenkmälern*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1912–13), 1:23–30. For a more recent assessment, see the important discussion in John Carey, "On the Interrelationships of Some *Cín Dromma Snechtai* Texts," *Ériu* 46 (1995), 71–92.

8 *Lebor Gabála Érenn*, ed. Macalister, 1:xi–xxii.

9 R. Mark Scowcroft, "*Leabhar Gabhála* Part I: The Growth of the Text," *Ériu* 38 (1987), 81–142.

10 See, for example, Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe, *Aoidhe mo chroidhe ceann Briain* (Poem XII) and *Ceannphort Éireann Ard Macha* (Poem XVII), ed. and trans. N.J.A. Williams, *The Poems of Giolla Brighde Mac Con Midhe*, Irish Texts Society 51 (Dublin, 1980), pp. 136–61, 190–203.

11 *Expugnatio Hibernica: The Conquest of Ireland by Giraldus Cambrensis*, ed. and trans. A.B. Scott and F.X. Martin (Dublin, 1978). On Gerald, see Robert Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales: A Voice of the Middle Ages* (Stroud, 2006; first published in 1982 as *Gerald of Wales, 1146–1223*), and the essays collected in Georgia Henley and A. Joseph McMullen, eds., *Gerald of Wales: New Perspectives on a Medieval Writer and Critic* (Cardiff, 2018).

family—who had spearheaded the invasion. It records their conquests and justifies them on political, religious, and historiographical grounds.[12] Numerous manuscript copies are extant, several of them written in Ireland in the centuries after the invasion.[13] Gerald's account was also used as a source by later medieval historians of these events and was translated into both Hiberno-English and Irish, the two vernaculars of the English community in Ireland.[14] In addition to the *Expugnatio*, Gerald also wrote another Irish work, the *Topographia Hibernica*.[15] The *Topographia* serves as a prelude to the *Expugnatio*; it includes an account of Irish history over the *longue durée* structured around a series of invasions by different peoples. What is striking about this is that the historiographical model Gerald adopted was that of the Gaels themselves as found in *Lebor gabála Érenn*.[16] But whereas *Lebor gabála* culminates with the arrival of the Gaels in Ireland, Gerald updated the list of invasions and settlements of Ireland to include that of the Anglo-Normans in his own time, which he depicted as the "ultima" (final) episode in the series.[17] Gerald's message was clear; Ireland had always been up for grabs, a prize to be won, and whoever could take it by force had a right to it. The Gaels therefore had no more right to it than any of the previous inhabitants. The English invasion of his own time was thus legitimated by history. Gerald effectively appropriated the Irish origin legend in the service of the English invaders.

Though they never forgot their overseas origins and distinct identity, by the 15th century, many of the descendants of the Anglo-Norman invaders had adopted the Gaelic language and become conversant and thoroughly

12 For a more detailed discussion of Gerald's adaptation of *Lebor gabála Érenn*, see Patrick Wadden, "Gerald of Wales, the *Topographia Hiberniae*, and the History of the Vikings in Ireland," *Viator* 51, no. 1 (2021), 273–310.

13 Catherine Margaret Rooney, "The Manuscripts of the Works of Gerald of Wales" (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 2005), pp. vi–xix; Bartlett, *Gerald of Wales*, pp. 175–76.

14 For the texts of the translations, see *The English Conquest of Ireland*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, EETS, O.S. 107 (London, 1896); and W. Stokes, "The Irish Abridgment of the *Expugnatio Hibernica*," *English Historical Review* 20 (1905), 77–115.

15 "Giraldus Cambrensis in *Topographia Hibernie*: Text of the First Recension," ed. John J. O'Meara, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* C 52 (1948–50), 166–77; *The History and Topography of Ireland*, trans. John J. O'Meara (Dundalk, 1951; repr. 1982).

16 Jeanne-Marie Boivin, *L'Irlande au Moyen Âge: Giraud de Barri et la "Topograhia Hibernica" (1188)* (Paris, 1993), pp. 91–106; Wadden, "Gerald of Wales."

17 Gerald of Wales, *Expugnatio Hibernica, Introitus in recitationem*, ed. Scott and Martin, 2–3. I have altered the translation by Scott and Martin, who render *ultime* as "latest." "Final" seems more closely to reflect Gerald's meaning, and was certainly his intention when he referred to Ruaidrí Úa Conchobair as "ultimus de hac gente monarcha" in the *Topographia Hibernica*, 3.44, ed. J.F. Dimock, *Giraldi Cambrensis opera*, vol. 5 (London, 1867), p. 188.

enmeshed in Gaelic culture.[18] This is reflected in the fact that Anglo-Irish lords were great patrons of bardic poetry. As Katharine Simms has discussed, poems commissioned by the members of this community share many of the characteristics of those commissioned by Gaels; however, as she pointed out, they are distinguished by the poets' willingness to use the historiographical framework of *Lebor gabála* as a means of justifying the settlers' presence and status in Ireland.[19] They did this by extending the list of invasions in *Lebor gabála* to include that by the Anglo-Normans during the 12th century, in what was likely unintentional emulation of Gerald.[20] By the end of the medieval period, therefore, the pseudo-historical content of *Lebor gabála*, which included the Gaelic origin legend, was being used by both the Gaels and the English of Ireland to express their identity and to assert their status as the rightful masters of Ireland. Then, in the 17th century, Geoffrey Keating, a Gaelic scholar descended from an English settler family, redeployed *Lebor gabála* in service of yet another agenda. In an age when confessional allegiances were colliding and combining with ethnic identities in a novel way, Keating followed Gerald's example by presenting the Anglo-Norman arrival in Ireland within the context of Ireland's long history of invasion and settlement by different peoples.[21] This time, however, his purpose was to promote the idea that the Gaels and the English of Ireland shared a common identity grounded in Catholicism and their long history of settlement in Ireland, an identity that united them in opposition to recently arrived Protestant English and Scottish planters.[22]

The Gaelic origin legend also gained currency outside Ireland in the later Middle Ages. In 14th-century Scotland, it was also deployed in debates concerning Scottish identity and political independence.[23] The kingdom of

18 For a recent, nuanced discussion of this process, see Katharine Simms, "Gaelic Culture and Society," in *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, vol. 1, *600–1550*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 415–40.

19 Katharine Simms, "Bards and Barons: The Anglo-Irish Aristocracy and the Native Culture," in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. R. Bartlett and A. MacKay (Oxford, 1989), pp. 181–82.

20 See, for example, Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn, *Fearann cloidhimh críoch Bhanbha*, ed. and trans. E. Knott, *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó Huiginn (1550–1591)*, Irish Texts Society 22–23, 2 vols (London, 1922–26), 1:120–31 (text), 2:80–86 (trans.); and Torna Óg mac Torna Uí Mhaolchonaire, *Ga med ngabhal fuair Ére*, ed. S. Prender, *The O'Clery Book of Genealogies, 23 D 17 (RIA) = Analecta Hibernica* 18 (1951), 169–72.

21 Seathrún Céitinn [Geoffrey Keating], *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn*, §39, ed. and trans. David Comyn and Patrick S. Dineen, *The History of Ireland by Geoffrey Keating DD*, Irish Texts Society 4, 8, 9, 15, 4 vols (London 1902–14), 3:358–69.

22 Bernadette Cunningham, *The World of Geoffrey Keating: History, Myth and Religion in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2000).

23 Wadden, "History and Identity."

Alba/Scotland emerged at the dawn of the 10th century in the place of the earlier kingdom of the Picts.[24] The kings of Alba claimed descent from the rulers of the early medieval Gaelic kingdom of Dál Riata, which had spanned territory in Ireland and northern Britain prior to its disappearance in the early Viking Age.[25] The Scottish kings' identity as descendants of Irish invaders remained central to their kingdom's identity until the end of the 13th century.[26] In the context of English attempts to subjugate Scotland at the end of the 13th and the early 14th centuries, by which stage the English conquest of Ireland was already more than a century old, the Scottish kings' Irish ancestry became problematic. This precipitated a change in perspective on the kingdom's origins, summed up in a 1320 letter to the pope in which the Scottish barons asserted their kingdom's right to political independence. The opening sections of this letter, known as the Declaration of Arbroath, summarized *Lebor gabála*'s account of Gaelic origins.[27] This version followed its exemplar by claiming for the Gaels—*Scotti* in Latin—an origin among the Scythians and tracing their migration briefly to Spain. Where the Declaration's account differs from that in *Lebor gabála* is in its claim that the Gaels migrated directly from Spain to northern Britain, without any mention of Ireland. Removing all mention of the fact that the Gaels of Scotland had arrived there from Ireland, the Declaration made Scotland look like the divinely ordained homeland of the Gaels. Perhaps most importantly, it emphasized the fact that the Scots were ethnically distinct from the English and pushed the date of the creation of the Scottish kingdom farther back in time, to a period before the arrival of the English in Britain. Both strategies were intended to strengthen the case for Scottish independence.

Over the course of a millennium, the Irish origin legend was thus reframed and repurposed on numerous occasions in the service of various agendas, some of them far removed from the world of the scribe who wrote—for instance—the version of *Lebor gabála* in the lost, 8th-century Book of Druimm Snechtai. The specifics of the Irish case may be unique, but the general principle is surely

24 Alex Woolf, *From Pictland to Alba, 789–1070*, New Edinburgh History of Scotland 2 (Edinburgh, 2007).

25 Patrick Wadden, "Dál Riata *c.* 1000: Genealogies and Irish Sea Politics," *Scottish Historical Review* 95.2, no. 241 (2016), 164–81.

26 Dauvit Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*, Studies in Celtic History (Woodbridge, 1999).

27 *The Declaration of Arbroath*, ed. and trans. J. Fergusson, *The Declaration of Arbroath* (Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 4–10. Fergusson's edition and a revised translation by Alan Borthwick can be viewed and downloaded from the website of the National Records of Scotland (https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/declaration#downloadable-resource, accessed 4 December 2020).

not. Early medieval origin legends remained popular throughout later medieval Europe. Jordanes's *Getica*, Gregory of Tours's *Historia Francorum*, and Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* all survive in manuscripts written centuries after their authors' deaths; there appears to have been particular interest in their works during the 12th century, though copies were also made down to the end of the medieval period.[28] Engagement with these texts was not solely antiquarian or for the purpose of preservation; in addition to being copied, they were also drawn on as sources by later historians for their own distinct purposes and agendas. Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* influenced a whole host of later medieval historians, particularly, though not exclusively, in England.[29] The many ways in which Gregory's work was read in the later medieval period, and the influence it exerted on later historiography, has been discussed by John Contreni. He has argued that, while direct engagement with Gregory's *Histories* declined for a period after the 11th century, its use as a source by Aimoin of Fleury, author of *De gestis regis Francorum libri iv*, meant that it exerted considerable influence over official French royal history of later centuries "in a way that Gregory would not recognize."[30]

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28 Mommsen's list of manuscripts of the *Getica* included several dating from the 12th century, in addition to others from the 13th, 14th, and 15th: *Iordanis Romana et Getica*, ed. Theodor Mommsen, MGH AA 5.1 (Berlin, 1882), pp. xlvi–lxix. Likewise, the list of manuscripts of Gregory's *Histories* compiled by Krusch and Levison, includes several written in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries: *Gregorii Episcopi Turonensis decem libri historiarum*, ed. Bruno Krusch and Wilhelm Levison, MGH SRM 1.1 (Hannover, 1951), pp. xxii–xxxv. For details of the manuscripts of Bede, see M.L.W. Laistner, with the collaboration of H.H. King, *A Hand-list of Bede Manuscripts* (Ithaca, 1943), 93 ff. This list has been updated and corrected in a number of subsequent studies; for the fullest list of the manuscripts of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, though without dates, see J.A. Westgard, "Dissemination and Reception of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* in Germany *c.*731–1500: The Manuscript Evidence" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Chapel Hill, 2005), pp. 135–41.

29 Bede's reception in the 12th century and later has been discussed by numerous authors, including A. Gransden, "Bede's Reputation as an Historian in Medieval England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 32 (1981), 397–425, reprinted in eadem, *Legends, Traditions and History in Medieval England* (London, 1992), pp. 1–29; R.H.C. Davis, "Bede after Bede," in *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill, C.J. Holdsworth, and J.L. Nelson (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 103–16. For a broader discussion of how later medieval English historians engaged with the period before the Norman conquest of 1066, see note 46 below.

30 John J. Contreni, "Gregory's Works in the High Medieval and Early Modern Periods," in *A Companion to Gregory of Tours*, ed. Alexander Callander Murray, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 63 (Leiden, 2016), pp. 566–81, especially 567–71, quoted at 570; idem, "Reading Gregory of Tours in the Middle Ages," in *The World of Gregory of Tours*, ed. Kathleen Mitchell and Ian Wood, Cultures, Beliefs, and Traditions 8 (Leiden, 2002), pp. 419–34.

The fate of early medieval origin legends in the later Middle Ages demonstrates two related points. First, it is very clear that origin legends had value outside the immediate context within which they were written. Regardless of the degree to which the political and cultural situations they found themselves in shaped the motives, perspectives, and agendas of those who wrote them down in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages—which, as we have seen, is a matter of considerable debate—origin legends transcended their immediate contexts. In addition, it is clearly the case that narratives of the origins and early history of early medieval *gentes* remained of interest for one reason or another for centuries after they were written, long after their authors' worlds had transformed. In part, this was because they were so adaptable, and could be constantly redeployed in the service of new agendas and situations.

Concurrent with the adaptation of existing origin legends to new purposes, the later Middle Ages also witnessed other developments within the genre. The 12th century has been identified as marking an important moment of transition from the 'early' to the 'high' Middle Ages, a transition that impacted the writing of origin legends more generally. The so-called 'twelfth-century renaissance' or 'long twelfth century' was one of significant change, and these changes have consequently been well-studied. One set of changes was historical. Across Europe, territories shifted from the relative chaos of the Viking Age towards increasingly centralized monarchies and kingdoms.[31] In Britain, the arrival of the Normans altered the focus of historical writing, opening up the potential for even more extended continental influence than had existed previously as well as bringing contemporary concerns of the Conquest to the forefront.[32] On the continent, the Crusades altered the political, cultural, economic, intellectual, and religious landscapes of the medieval world.[33] Another set of changes was intellectual, as from this period of relative political stability emerged the

31 On this process, see William Chester Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 2001); Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, 2009); and Chris Wickham, *Medieval Europe* (New Haven, 2016).

32 See Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 1, *c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974) and *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 2, *c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (Ithaca, 1982); Elisabeth van Houts, "Historical Writing," in *A Companion to the Anglo-Norman World*, ed. Christopher Harper-Bill and Elisabeth van Houts (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 103–22; John Spence, *Reimagining History in Anglo-Norman Prose Chronicles* (York, 2013); and Emily A. Winkler, *Royal Responsibility in Anglo-Norman Historical Writing* (Oxford, 2017). A portion of the following material also appears in Lindy Brady, *The Origin Legends of Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2022).

33 See Anna Sapir Abulafia, *Christians and Jews in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (London, 1995); R.N. Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Manchester, 1999); and John D.

so-called 'twelfth century renaissance,' which saw an increased interest in the inheritance of the classical world in turn leading to innovations in education and cultural production.[34] In consequence, the production and use of origin stories also changed in some significant ways. It was during this tumultuous transitional period that Geoffrey of Monmouth wrote *De gestis Britonum*, which is the subject of our second case study.[35] Geoffrey's work became one of the most influential origin narratives in high medieval western Europe. As this work and its legacy underscore, the high medieval period saw origin stories—in line with other written material throughout the medieval west—shift as a genre to become more literary in nature.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of Geoffrey's text, which shifted the genre of origin narratives in some fundamental and important ways. *De gestis Britonum* was immediately and wildly popular in the medieval period, with over 200 known surviving manuscripts. It was a polarising text that found a wide and enthusiastic audience at the same time as many of Geoffrey's contemporaries despaired at his framing of overtly fictitious legends under the guise of history.[36] Consequently, Geoffrey's work has been well-served by modern scholars. Important foundational studies were undertaken by Neil Wright and Julia Crick, and Joshua Byron Smith and Georgia Henley have recently edited *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth* with updated studies on his sources, contemporary resonances, and global reception as well as surveys of scholarly approaches to his work.[37] *De gestis Britonum* had

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Cotts, *Europe's Long Twelfth Century: Order, Anxiety, and Adaptation, 1095–1229* (Basingstoke, 2013).

34 The classic study is Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1927); see further Paul Magdalino, ed., *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London, 1992); C. Warren Hollister, ed., *Anglo-Norman Political Culture and the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Proceedings of the Borchard Conference on Anglo-Norman History, 1995* (Woodbridge, 1997); Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Woodbridge, 1999); and Swanson, *The Twelfth-Century Renaissance*.

35 Also known as the *Historia regum Britanniae*. Michael D. Reeve, ed., and Neil Wright, trans., *Geoffrey of Monmouth: The History of the Kings of Britain* (Woodbridge, 2007), and most recent bibliography and studies in Joshua Byron Smith and Georgia Henley, eds., *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth* (Leiden, 2020).

36 For Geoffrey of Monmouth's impact, see Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History: Trojans, Teutons, and Anglo-Saxons* (Montreal, 1982), pp. 7–27.

37 Neil Wright, *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. 1, *Bern, Burgerbibliothek, MS. 568* (Cambridge, 1985); Neil Wright, *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. 2, *The First Variant Version: A Critical Edition* (Cambridge, 1988); Julia C. Crick, *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. 3, *A Summary Catalogue of the Manuscripts* (Cambridge, 1989); Julia C. Crick, *The Historia regum Britanniae*

a significant and immediate impact on the genre of origin legends in Britain and beyond. As many chapters in this collection have illustrated, the origin stories of the early medieval period could often be quite terse in nature and were embedded within longer narratives. Origin episodes themselves could be brief and sometimes presented contradictory versions of events or left significant gaps in the narrative that later authors sought to fill. In contrast, Geoffrey's *De gestis Britonum* offered smooth, narrative prose that—as his detractors often noted in frustration—created a seamless narrative which flitted lightly across the framework of known history, aligning only occasionally with reality.[38]

Geoffrey's impact on the collective medieval imagination as a whole was significant, but for the purposes of this collection, we wish to highlight three particularly noteworthy ways in which *De gestis Britonum* impacted the writing of origin legends in the high Middle Ages. First, Geoffrey's work shifted the genre towards the inclusion of more overtly fictional elements. While the origin stories discussed in this collection are situated firmly in the realm of the legendary rather than the historical, they nonetheless represent genuine attempts on the part of early medieval authors to depict the known or believed events of the past in a way that aligned with the understood metaphysical realities of the historical present. *De gestis Britonum*, on the other hand, introduced giants, magic, and obscure prophecies into the fabric of 'historical' foundation legends.[39] In tone and style, there was a marked shift from the chronicles we have seen in the early medieval period to *De gestis Britonum*, which was something more akin to a chivalric romance.[40] Even ostensibly historical episodes, such as Arthur's Roman campaign, were invented out of whole cloth (and could be easily verified as fictional by comparison to extant, widely circulated

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of Geoffrey of Monmouth, vol. 4, *Dissemination and Reception in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1991); Neil Wright, *The Historia regum Britanniae of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, vol. 5, *Gesta regum Britannie* (Cambridge, 1991); and Smith and Henley, eds., *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*.

38 See Simon Meecham-Jones, "Early Reactions to Geoffrey's Work," pp. 181–208; Siân Echard, "The Latin Reception of the *De gestis Britonum*," pp. 209–34; Owain Wyn Jones, "The Most Excellent Princes: Geoffrey of Monmouth and Medieval Welsh Historical Writing," pp. 257–90; and Georgia Henley, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and the Conventions of History Writing in Early 12th-Century England," pp. 291–314, in *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Smith and Henley.

39 On giants, see Tina Marie Boyer, *The Giant Hero in Medieval Literature* (Leiden, 2016); on magic, see Corrine Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge, 2010); and on prophecy, see Victoria Flood, *Prophecy, Politics and Place in Medieval England: From Geoffrey of Monmouth to Thomas of Erceldoune* (Cambridge, 2016).

40 See Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2004).

sources). Geoffrey's critics found him to be patently unbelievable for precisely these reasons, yet for those who eagerly read and circulated his work, the *De gestis Britonum* would alter the shape of origin narratives to include more content which would be considered overtly fictional from both medieval and modern perspectives.

Second, the narrative focus of the *De gestis Britonum* also marks a shift in interest within origin stories from the deeds of ancestors to the deeds of their descendants. The early medieval texts on which the preceding chapters have focused presented origin legends as part of the distant past. These works then jump forward to 'known' (usually Roman) historical time before transitioning into contemporary history. The narratives are discrete, with ancestral founding legends positioned as important to the past, but distinct from the present. *De gestis Britonum*, in contrast, offers an unbroken lineage of rich prehistory in which each generation of Brutus's descendants features as prominently as he does within the overall narrative. Not only did this mean that part of Geoffrey's legacy in the high medieval period was lengthier texts—Wace's *Roman de Brut* clocks in at around 15,000 lines; Laȝamon's *Brut* is 16,000—but also that in shifting the focus off a single ancestral figure, later medieval authors writing under Geoffrey's influence had more freedom to expand the narratives of other pseudohistorical figures (as can be seen most memorably in the enduring legacy of Geoffrey's Arthurian mythologizing).[41] The impact of *De gestis Britonum* meant that on the whole, origin narrative from the high medieval period tended to take the form of more linear narratives that encompassed a greater range of pseudohistorical figures.

Third, the focus of *De gestis Britonum* was firmly on the history of Britain and the Britons. While the Anglo-Saxons make an appearance at the end of the narrative, its focus is clearly an extended study in British prehistory, evident from the outset in Geoffrey's famous claim to have used "Britannici sermonis librum uetutissimum" (a very old book in the British tongue) as the source for his own work.[42] While modern scholars have debated the extent to which Geoffrey's narrative was actually 'pro-British,' 'pro-Norman,' or something else

41 See e.g. Norris J. Lacy, ed., *A History of Arthurian Scholarship* (Cambridge, 2006); Jankulak, *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, pp. 67–77; and Siân Echard, ed., *The Arthur of Medieval Latin Literature: The Development and Dissemination of the Arthurian Legend in Medieval Latin* (Cardiff, 2011).

42 Reeve, ed., and Wright, trans., *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, p. 4; for discussion of which see most recently Ben Guy, "Geoffrey of Monmouth's Welsh Sources," in *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Smith and Henley, pp. 31–66,.

altogether, there is no doubting the subject of its focus.[43] Geoffrey's work stood at the forefront of a gradual shift which saw later medieval authors most often focusing on extended treatments of the origins of a single people rather than introducing a catalogue of peoples and their origins at the outset.[44] On the whole, then, the publication of *De gestis Britonum* marked a moment of significant departure between early and later medieval origin narratives. After the influence of Geoffrey's work, origin legends from the high medieval period tended to include more overtly fictional elements; be formed of lengthier and more linear narratives focusing on multiple figures rather than a single ancestor; and focus on the origins of a single people rather than a broader region.

The influence of Geoffrey's *De gestis Britonum* made origin narratives quite popular during the high medieval period, and their impact was not limited to the realm of history and literature. As Hugh A. MacDougall has discussed, *De gestis Britonum* had an outsized influence on the real-world politics of high medieval England and Wales, as individual monarchs sought to align themselves with the genealogies and prophecies popularized by Geoffrey's work.[45] Within the literary and historical spheres, *De gestis Britonum* spurred widespread interest in the story of Brutus and Britain's supposed Trojan origins.[46] The Troy legend was widespread for a range of peoples throughout medieval Europe,[47] and *De gestis Britonum* gave it particular resonance in the Insular

43 For recent discussion, see Michael A. Faletra, *Wales and the Medieval Colonial Imagination: The Matters of Britain in the Twelfth Century* (New York, 2014) and "Colonial Preoccupations in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *De gestis Britonum*," in *A Companion to Geoffrey of Monmouth*, ed. Smith and Henley, pp. 317–40.

44 This is not, of course, to say that such works did not exist during the later medieval period—see e.g. Michele Campopiano and Henry Bainton, eds., *Universal Chronicles in the High Middle Ages* (York, 2017). On burgeoning nationalism in the later medieval period, see e.g. David McRoberts, "The Scottish Church and Nationalism in the Fifteenth Century," *The Innes Review* 19 (1968), 3–14; Andrea Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013); Caspar Hirschi, *The Origins of Nationalism: An Alternative History from Ancient Rome to Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2012); pp. 78–103; and Bradshaw, *"And So Began the Irish Nation": Nationality, National Consciousness and Nationalism in Pre-modern Ireland*.

45 MacDougall, *Racial Myth in English History*, pp. 7–27.

46 On Brutus, see Summerfield, "Filling the Gap."

47 For the Trojan legend and the Franks, see Ghosh, *Writing the Barbarian Past*, pp. 101–10; for the Normans see Francis Ingledew, "The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: The Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*," *Speculum* 69 (1994), 665–704; and on Europe more broadly see František Graus, "Troja und trojanische Herkunftssage im Mittelalter," in *Kontinuität und Transformation der Antike im Mittelalter. Veröffentlichung der Kongressakten zum Freiburger Symposion des Mediävistenverbandes*, ed. Willi Erzgräber (Sigmaringen, 1989), pp. 25–43; Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell, eds., *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Mod-*

region, where it was prevalent throughout England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the later medieval period.[48] The interest in individual origins that *De gestis Britonum* had spurred carried forward during this period as well. For the British, as Owain Wyn Jones has demonstrated, *De gestis Britonum* played a "central role" "not only in vernacular historical writing, but also in the way the Welsh conceived of their past and explained their present" during the later medieval period when Geoffrey's "work had become accepted as the foundational narrative of Welsh history."[49] In England, the immediacy of the Norman impact brought about a flurry of historical writing which looked to the Anglo-Saxon past, often through rose-coloured lenses.[50] Looking north, Scottish narratives of origin were a subject of increasing interest as Scottish historical writing gained momentum over the high medieval period,[51] while in Ireland, as we have seen, *Lebor gabála* continued to be copied and circulated while an interest in the classical world increasingly made itself felt in vernacular literature as a whole.[52]

Yet as works like *De gestis Britonum* increased in popularity, medieval authors were also eager to question the historicity of texts they felt to be lacking in rigour. Geoffrey of Monmouth was the target of notorious scorn from his contemporaries. Gerald of Wales wrote, of a man tormented by demons,

> Contigit aliquando, spiritibus immundis nimis eidem insultatantibus, ut Evangelium Johannis ejus in gremio poneretur: qui statim tanquam

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ern Europe (Toronto, 2004); Federico, *New Troy*; and Wolfram A. Keller, *Selves & Nations: The Troy Story from Sicily to England in the Middle Ages* (Heidelberg, 2008). In addition, see the chapters above by Michael Clarke and Helen Fulton.

48 See Tyler, "Trojans in Anglo-Saxon England"; Fulton, "Uses of the Troy Story in Medieval Ireland and Wales"; Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature*; and Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature*.

49 Jones, "Geoffrey of Monmouth and Medieval Welsh Historical Writing," pp. 257 and 258; see further his *Historical Writing in Medieval Wales*.

50 See e.g. Robert Allen Rouse, *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 2005); Martin Brett and David A. Woodman, eds., *The Long Twelfth-Century View of the Anglo-Saxon Past* (Farnham, 2015); and Jay Paul Gates and Brian O'Camb, eds., *Remembering the Medieval Past: Generative Uses of England's Pre-Conquest Past, 10th to 15th Centuries* (Leiden, 2019).

51 Broun, *The Irish Identity of the Kingdom of the Scots*; E.J. Cowan, "Myth and Identity in Early Medieval Scotland," *Scottish History Review* 63 (1984), 111–35; Roger Mason, "Scotching the Brut: Politics, History, and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain," in *Scotland and England 1286–1815*, ed. Roger Mason (Edinburgh, 1987), pp. 60–84; Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland*; and Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature*.

52 Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, pp. 5–57; O'Connor, ed., *Classical Literature and Learning in Medieval Irish Narrative*; and Miles, *Heroic Saga and Classical Epic in Medieval Ireland*.

> aves evolantes, omnes penitus evanuerunt. Quo sublato postmodum, et Historia Britonum a Galfrido Arthuro tractata, experiendi causa, loco ejusdem subrogata, non solum corpori ipsius toti, sed etiam libro superposito, longe solito crebrius et taediosius insederunt.
>
> When he was harassed beyond endurance by these unclean spirits, Saint John's Gospel was placed on his lap, and then they all vanished immediately, flying away like so many birds. If the Gospel were afterwards removed and the *History of the Kings of Britain* by Geoffrey of Monmouth put there in its place, just to see what would happen, the demons would alight all over his body, and on the book, too, staying there longer than usual and being even more demanding.[53]

William of Newburgh simply wrote caustically that

> cuncta quae homo ille de Arturo et ejus vel successoribus vel post Vortigirnum praedecessoribus scribere curavit partim ab ipso, partim et ab aliis constat esse conficta, sive effrenata mentiendi libidine sive etiam gratia placendi Britonibus, quorum plurimi tam bruti esse feruntur ut adhuc Arturum tanquam venturum exspectare dicantur, eumque mortuum nec audire patiantur,
>
> it is clear that Geoffrey's entire narration about Arthur, his successors, and his predecessors after Vortigern, was invented partly by himself and partly by others. The motive was either an uncontrolled passion for lying, or secondly a desire to please the Britons, most of whom are considered to be so barbaric that they are said to be still awaiting the future coming of Arthur, being unwilling to entertain the fact of his death.[54]

Yet despite the scorn with which Geoffrey of Monmouth's contemporaries and subsequent generations of medieval historians greeted his account of the British past, his *De gestis Britonum* proved to be one of the most popular texts in medieval Britain. While some cast doubt on the legend of British origins that Geoffrey offered, for many more, it was *his* vision of the legendary origins of Britain that would prove enduring.

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53 Gerald of Wales, *The Journey through Wales / The Description of Wales*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London, 1978), *The Journey through Wales*, 1.5, pp. 117–18.

54 William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs: Book I*, ed. and trans. P.G. Walsh and M.J. Kennedy (Warminster, 1988), pp. 32–33.

These two case studies demonstrate that even as the nature and characteristics of origin legends changed with the passing centuries, nonetheless, they remained popular throughout the later medieval period and beyond. They were in a constant state of flux, being forged and reforged in response to changing social, cultural, and political circumstance. Yet they remained relevant and of interest. In part, this was because of their etiological nature; all origin legends are etiologies to one degree or another, intended to explain the world as their authors knew it.[55] This could include justification for contemporary political hegemonies and alliances, or cultural or religious allegiances. As the world changed, so origin legends had to be adapted and updated in order to remain relevant. This process continued into the early modern and modern periods, when the range of purposes and the kinds of engagement with them both expanded. But the challenge of telling that story belongs to another book.

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55 Donnchadh Ó Corráin, "Irish Origin Legends and Genealogy: Recurrent Aetiologies," in *History and Heroic Tale: A Symposium*, ed. Tore Nyberg, Iørn Piø, P.M. Sørenen, and A. Trommer (Odense 1985), pp. 51–96.

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